BACKGROUNDS OF BOOK REVIEWING

MALLORY

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Ann Arbor, Mich.

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BACKGROUNDS
of
BOOK REVIEWING

EDITED BY
HERBERT S. MALLORY
of the
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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TO YOU WHO HAVE TOUCHED
MANY LIVES TO FINER FORM

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FOREWORD

The design of this book is primarily to indicate the "form and pressure" of contemporary reviewing. But since we cannot clearly know a thing except as we know its relationships, it has appeared essential to afford glimpses of the seven or eight arts and to include some sketching of fundamental aesthetic theory. The study of such a collection should enable wider and more intimate artistic contact, some discrimination in regard to criticism, and a growing power to formulate one's own increasingly intelligent tastes.

As to our selections, variety in materials and divergences in expressed opinion are to be not merely anticipated but desired. Where contiguity and contrast do not assure the maximum of benefit, the reader may import unity and interest by reading topically—pursuing, for example, from article to article such discussions as that of the primacy of external plotted action in drama and story, or that of the attainment and significance of style.

The editor believes that in general the knowledge of enjoyable things increases power to enjoy them. Surely we need not dread that any critical attitude likely to supervene with most of us will spoil the due pleasure in works of art. A flowery woodland is no less delightful to the analyzing and name-giving botanist than to us who casually stop to gather violet and Jack-in-the-pulpit, but have only vague notions about nitrogen-forming bacteria and the Mendelian theory. When it comes to the studying of painting or music or poetry, is not the knowledge slowly gained, even for him who has tried sketching or piano-playing or the writing of free verse, a continual contribution to artistic appreciation and to self-fulfilment? And the intelligent enjoyment of any particular art is an aid to a possessive pleasure in others.

But why, after all, so much ado about art and the criticism thereof? Briefly, waiving the question of relationships between particular dance-tunes or pictures, plays or novels, and any one's conduct of life, there can be no doubt that the moralist like Tolstoi and the aesthete like Anatole France are right in believing art to be not only life-expressing, but also life-enlarging. The biologist, moreover, who talks of surplus energy, of spontaneous discipline through play, of sports as balance-restoring recapitulations, and the psychologist who probes the soul with a theory of pleasure-seeking

and pain-avoiding, agree with artist and critic that artistic effort and artistic appreciation are promotive of life. Let us, then, seek contact with more of art, increase our pleasure by inquiring what is to be looked for in the various art kinds, and discriminate among pieces of art by evaluating our own pleasures in them—all to the end of more abundant and finer life.

For the rest, the only right Foreword is an Afterword, and one who has been feeding rather largely on book reviews, critical programs, and aesthetic theorizing must either find a chance to air his own conclusions or sternly kennel them in the unconscious. The present editor can hardly be blamed if he follows the best current practice in refusing uncomfortable inhibitions. Now one soon perceives that three principal conceptions are making themselves increasingly felt in contemporary criticism, though they are most articulate among the impressionists. First, art being self-expression through a concrete medium, a particular work of art, like a particular human being, is to be taken for what it is, or let alone. Second, each of us, whether artist or not, is creator of his own world, abides in his peculiar illusion of reality. Third, the critic is, or should be, an artist, differing from other artists in that the material through which he realizes himself is in large part these others and their productions, as they exist in the critic's mind.

To attack or defend these principles would be no proper concern for a foreword, but some points should be noted. Accepting art in general as self-expression does not commit one to the asserted corollary, all expression is art—in the narrow sense. Nor does calling a thing art either fix its aesthetic significance or put it quite beyond the pale of relative human evaluation. There are indeed artists, aesthetes, and impressionistic critics who regard any censure of a work of art that they like as *lese majesté*: for them art is theoretically *imperium in imperio*. You may let their favorite pictures, novels, or tone-poems alone, and be hanged to you—but you will be hooted at as a moralistic ass if, because these are products of human beings, you discuss them as therefore assayable for life-values, and commensurable, even rankable, on the basis of such assay. These very persons, however, as Brunetière remarks in connection with Anatole France, may be not a little given to intuitive assayings of their own, and to denunciation of what to them seem clipped or false coinages.

As for the view, derived from Schopenhauer, that there exists for the human mind not a single and unique world but

instead the countless dissimilar worlds of countless individuals, this furnishes the metaphysical basis of impressionistic criticism, and appears to an artist-critic like De Gourmont a most vitalizing conception. In his phrase, it is not what exists that we see, but what we see that exists. All that exists is our idea, and in that sense everything is ideal—even "bad" art. Or, to make application in other terms, it is uncritical to attempt overthrowing the ideality that is any artist's work of art by the ideality of any other man's outraged theory.

The third contention, that the critic too is an artist, was implicit in the old phrase "creative criticism." But that the primary aim of the critic, as of the artist in general, should be to create something that must excite pleasurable emotion in other men, regardless of whether it may also inform or edify them, is only today beginning to be urged by the critics themselves. Since every man, as such, rightly lives forth in every deed and breath his own world, and can no other, nothing else can be demanded of any artist than to externalize himself, represent the world which his seeing causes to exist, regardless of whether from any point of view of any other person his artistic cosmos seem tremendous or trivial, logical and true or fantastic and false, slimy and fetid or upreared and clean with the winds of heaven. Also, the critic as artist will be free to build his Venice out of plundered marbles and to adorn himself with whatever peacock feathers he can ingraft. Only one may expect—may one not?—that he will speak with most gratulation of those fellow-artists whose ignorance of architectonics, and wayward founding upon sands, or whose Midas touch and Barmecide feasting, so conduce to furnishing richly forth the canny critic. But to talk common-sense, it must be declared that if the critic sets out to be artist only, he departs from being critic at all. For the fact remains that when we compare artist and critic we are conscious of a profound dissociation of human personality, so to speak, nor has the procedure of criticism so far done much to convince us that the dissociate selves will naturally merge again into total "unaccommodated man."

But it must not be supposed that the common man will find these regions always chill and arid. For instance, to warm the cockles of our hearts, there were—and now will ever be—the *Vanity Fair* Assizes, of April, 1922. There were Ten Wise Men, as some will remember, foregathering in Gotham at the call of an editor quite free of guile or self-interest. There had been subpoenaed two hundred culprit-

candidates, including poets, philosophers, scientists, dancers, saints, and baseball players. Homer came, and Sappho; St. Francis and Billy Sunday; Marcus Aurelius and Babe Ruth; Milton, Elinor Glyn, Strawinsky, Florenz Ziegfeld, Theda Bara—a noble two hundred! And the Ten Learned Justicers came: some pathetically young—free-lances of the morning, so devoted, so austere; the others, not old—they never can grow old in the hearts of their countrymen—, but greying at the temples and—waisted with vigils! They came, and sat. Few and short were the prayers they said, and they spoke not a word of sorrow, as they steadfastly—judged! On a scale of —25, +25, they incorruptibly dealt the marks. Shakespeare made the best showing, with 22.4; Bach came second with 22. Charlie Chaplin made a spurt to 17.2, with Aristotle pressing close at 16.7. Tolstoi was given only 2.6, and Tennyson 2; with Luther slipping back to .1, Riley to —8.4, and dear Mrs. Glyn to —12.8. Billy Sunday, quite out of form, made the lowest grade, —21.8, but Flo Ziegfeld had a clean five plus, and—

Of course the precious tabulation settles only one thing, or rather, ten things; the knowledge and feeling of each judge concerning each defendant, and the judge's philosophy of life. One is bound, however, to record the fact that if all critics were as honest and out-spoken as these, we should hand down less of debatable tradition and do less sentimentalizing about art that comes with a name. The frequent vote of zero, which any statistician would pronounce in this case entirely misleading as to the culprit's rating, did most eloquently declare the indifference or the "lack of familiarity with the subject," to use the bland editorial phrase, of the casting judge. They were honest judges and they did their duty as they saw it. And thank God for the *Vanity Fair* Assizes! Hereafter no one of these critics, at least—and they are prophets not without honor in their own country—can assume the impressionist pose of being too Olympian to discover anything but patterns of flat color when looking down upon Greenwich Village and Lick Observatory, a Gothic spire and an abandoned mine-shaft, a propounder of Follies, an expounder of relativities, or a fellow critic. *Venerunt, sederunt, judicaverunt!*

Shall none of us judge, then? Must we be merely benevolent interpreters or disinterested "catalyzers"? Why, the choice of one work or artist to talk about instead of another is a judgment, and to wish others to see a work of art as we

see it is to impose penalty or bestow reward. Browning[1] implies that indifference is possible—for a Setebos or a Caliban!

> Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
> That march now from the mountain to the sea;
> Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
> Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
> Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
> Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
> Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
> And two worms he whose nippers end in red.
> As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

And if we judge, are we but stupid moralistic hypocrites, unfit to tie the shoes of art? Every created being, we are told, is to be thought of only as more or less successful in getting what it wants, in adapting available means to instinctive ends. And to pass moral judgment upon the means and ends of any man, most of all an artist, is to the emancipated to stultify oneself as bourgeois, or professorial, or American—or all three. To which the one who is happy in blindness and chains replies once more with the terms of Matthew Arnold. "How to live" is a moral question, and everything that affects us with pleasantness or unpleasantness, everything we feel about as ugly or beautiful, everything that induces either sensual or spiritual enjoyment, that moves us to an exertion or a suspension of will to get or be, contributes to determine our solution of the problem of living. Art does immensely affect us in these ways, and we shall naturally go on recognizing our reactions to it as life-enlarging or life-diminishing and instinctively, but also with good reason, rating particular pieces of art as good or bad on the score of their general human influence.

Yet the supporters, like the opponents, of Arnold make too little of the fact that he was a poet as well as an ethical critic. When we argue about his insistence upon greatness of substance in poetry, we need to recall the accompanying insistence upon a due perfection of form. It is his sense of inevitable form in the "touchstones" that makes him refuse to offer any abstract paraphrase to serve as divining rod for poetic greatness. He explicitly

[1]I refer to Robert Browning, an early Victorian verse-writer still studied in some universities, mainly to form the style of prospective Ph. D's. The high rating of Browning by the Ten Judges—his average is 5.5, while that of the thoroughly up-to-date Mr. Theodore Dreiser, for example, is only 8.2—is but too likely to cause a recrudescence of his vogue. It is regrettable that the Judges could not in every case weigh the probable consequences of their genial tolerance.

recognizes that in art as in life it is substance that produces and determines form—its humanly apprehensible aspect. Given high truth and high seriousness, or intense naive emotion which can ever so little contemplate itself, then the expression of these in concrete forms will achieve a blossomy grace, a rough-hewn earthiness, or a melodious poignancy, proportionate to the quality of the substance and the degree of its possession by the artist. What is tinkling and tinselled, or grovelling and toadlike, can have those qualities only because the incarnate thought and feeling were antecedently such. What rainbows through the mind, whether as misty intimation or full-circling conception, attains to self-conscious existence only with concrete embodiment, and it then proves to be something different than even its creator knew. The Balzacs are held to their anguished wrestling with form not by any childish craving to be hailed as stylists, but by an awed sense of grappling in the dusk with some demon-angel which, if but dragged across the dawn, may serve mankind in palpable divinity. We capture substance and know the nature of it only through and to the measure of an individual shape. Form is bulking, shining substance, as life is living things.

H. S. M.

Straybrook, Ann Arbor,
December 25, 1922.

BACKGROUNDS OF BOOK REVIEWING

THE BOOKS THAT I READ

By THEODORE ROOSEVELT

I am asked to tell when and how I do my reading, and what books I read. I am afraid my answer will not be so instructive as it ought to be, for I have never followed any definite plan in reading; and it seems to me that no plan can be laid down that will be generally applicable. If a man is not fond of books, to him reading of any kind will be a drudgery. I most sincerely commiserate such a person, but I do not know how to help him. If a man or a woman is fond of books he or she will naturally seek the books that the mind and soul demand. Suggestions of a possibly helpful character can be made by outsiders, but only suggestions; and they will probably be helpful about in proportion to the outsider's knowledge of the mind and soul of the person to be helped.

Train the mental muscles

Of course if anyone finds that he never reads serious literature, if all his reading is frothy and trashy, he would do well to try to train himself to like books that the general agreement of cultivated and sound-thinking persons has placed among the classics. It is as discreditable to the mind to be unfit for sustained mental effort as it is to the body of a young man to be unfit for sustained physical effort. Let a man or woman, young man or girl, read some good author, say Gibbon or Macaulay, until sustained mental effort brings power to enjoy the books worth enjoying. When this has been achieved the man can soon trust himself to pick out for himself the particular good books which appeal to him.

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Personal taste

The equation of personal taste is as powerful in reading as in eating; and within certain broad limits the matter is merely one of individual preference, having nothing to do with the quality either of the book or of the reader's mind. I like apples, pears, oranges, pineapples and peaches. I dislike bananas, alligator pears and prunes. The first fact is certainly not to my credit, although it is to my advantage; and the second at least does not show moral turpitude. At times in the tropics I have been exceedingly sorry I could not learn to like bananas, and on round-ups, in the cow country in the old days, it was even more unfortunate not to like prunes; but I simply could not make myself like either, and that was all there was to it.

In the same way I read over and over again "Guy Mannering," "The Antiquary," "Pendennis," "Vanity Fair," "Our Mutual Friend," and the "Pickwick Papers"; whereas I make heavy weather of most parts of the "Fortunes of Nigel," "Esmond," and the "Old Curiosity Shop"—to mention only books I have tried to read during the last month. I have no question that the latter three books are as good as the first six; doubtless for some people they are better; but I do not like them, any more than I like prunes or bananas.

In the same way I read and re-read "Macbeth" and "Othello"; but not "King Lear" nor "Hamlet." I know perfectly well that the latter are as wonderful as the former—I wouldn't venture to admit my shortcomings regarding them if I couldn't proudly express my appreciation of the other two! But at my age I might as well own up, at least to myself, to my limitations, and read the books I thoroughly enjoy.

Vicious or worthless books

But this does not mean permitting one's self to like what is vicious or even simply worthless. If any man finds that he cares to read "Bel Ami," he will do well to keep a watch on the reflex centers of his moral nature, and to brace himself with a course of Eugene Brieux or Henry Bordeaux. If he does not care for "Anna Karenina," "War and Peace," "Sebastopol," and "The Cossacks," he misses much; but if he cares for the "Kreutzer Sonata" he had better make up his mind that for

pathological reasons he will be wise thereafter to avoid Tolstoy entirely. Tolstoy is an interesting and stimulating writer, but an exceedingly unsafe moral adviser.

It is clear that the reading of vicious books for pleasure should be eliminated. It is no less clear that trivial and vulgar books do more damage than can possibly be offset by any entertainment they yield. There remain enormous masses of books, of which no man can read more than a limited number, and among which each reader should choose those which meet his own particular needs. There is no such thing as a list of "the hundred best books," or the "best five-foot library."

"Best books"

Dozens of series of excellent books, one hundred to each series, can be named, all of reasonably equal merit and each better for many readers than any of the others; and probably not more than half a dozen books would appear in all these lists. As for a "five-foot library," scores can readily be devised, each of which at some given time, for some given man, under certain conditions, will be best. But to attempt to create such a library that will be of universal value is foreordained to futility.

Within broad limits, therefore, the reader's personal and individual taste must be the guiding factor. I like hunting books and books of exploration and adventure. I do not ask anyone else to like them. I distinctly do not hold my own preferences as anything whatever but individual preferences; and this article is to be accepted as confessional rather than didactic. With this understanding I admit a liking for novels where something happens; and even among these novels I can neither explain nor justify why I like some and do not like others; why among the novels of Sienkiewicz I cannot stand "Quo Vadis," and never tire of "With Fire and Sword," "Pan Michael," the "Deluge," and the "Knights of the Cross."

Colonel Roosevelt's tastes

Of course, I know that the best critics scorn the demand among novel readers for the "happy ending." Now, in really great books, in an epic like Milton's, in dramas like those of Aeschylus and Sophocles, I am

Happy ending

entirely willing to accept and even demand tragedy; and also in poetry that cannot be called great. But not in good readable novels, of sufficient length to enable me to get interested in the hero and heroine!

There are enough horror and grimness and sordid squalor in real life with which an active man has to grapple; and when I turn to the world of literature—of books considered as books, and not as instruments of my profession—I do not care to study suffering unless for some sufficient purpose. It is only a very exceptional novel which I read if He does not marry Her; and even in exceptional novels I much prefer this consummation. I am not defending my attitude. I am merely stating it.

Reading in streaks

Like every one else I am apt to read in streaks. If I get interested in any subject I read different books connected with it, and probably also read books on subjects suggested by it. Having read Carlyle's "Frederick the Great"—with its splendid description of the battles, and of the unyielding courage and thrifty resourcefulness of the iron-tempered king; and with its deification of able brutality in the name of morality, and its practice of the suppression and falsification of the truth under the pretense of preaching veracity—I turned to Macaulay's essay on this subject, and found that the historian whom it has been the fashion of the intellectuals to patronize or deride showed a much sounder philosophy and an infinitely greater appreciation of and devotion to truth than was shown by the loquacious apostle of the doctrine of reticence.

Then I took up Waddington's "Guerre de Sept Ans"; then I read all I could about Gustavus Adolphus; and, gradually dropping everything but the military side, I got hold of quaint little old histories of Eugene of Savoy and Turenne. In similar fashion my study of and delight in Mahan sent me farther afield, to read queer old volumes about de Ruyter and the daring warrior-merchants of the Hansa, and to study, as well as I could, the feats of Suffren and Tegethoff. I did not need to study Farragut.

Mahaffy's books started me to re-read—in translation, alas!—the post-Athenian Greek authors. After Ferrero I did the

same thing as regards the Latin authors, and then industriously read all kinds of modern writers on the same period, finishing with Oman's capital essay on "Seven Roman Statesmen." Gilbert Murray brought me back from Greek history to Greek literature, and thence by a natural suggestion to parts of the Old Testament, to the Nibelungenlied, to the Roland lay and the *chansons de gestes,* to Beowulf and finally to the great Japanese hero tale, the story of the Forty-Nine Ronins.

Now, I read Burroughs too often to have him suggest anything save himself; but I am exceedingly glad that at last Charles Sheldon has arisen to show what a hunter-naturalist, who adds the ability of the writer to the ability of the trained observer and outdoor adventurer, can do for our last great wilderness, Alaska. From Sheldon I turned to Stewart Edward White, and then began to wander afar, with Herbert Ward's "Voice From the Congo," and Mary Kingsley's writings, and Hudsons' "El Ombu," and Cunningham Grahame's sketches of South America. A re-reading of The Federalist led me to Burke, to Trevelyan's history of Fox and of our own Revolution, to Lecky; and finally by way of Malthus and Adam Smith and Lord Acton and Bagehot to my own contemporaries, to Ross and George Alger.

Even in pure literature, having nothing to do with history, philosophy, sociology or economy, one book will often suggest another, so that one finds one has unconsciously followed a regular course of reading. Once I traveled steadily from Montaigne through Addison, Swift, Steele, Lamb, Irving and Lowell to Crothers and Kenneth Grahame—and if it be objected that some of these *could* not have suggested the others, I can only answer that they *did* suggest them.

Reading poetry

I suppose that every one passes through periods during which he reads no poetry; and some people, of whom I am one, also pass through periods during which they voraciously devour poets of widely different kinds. Now it will be Horace and Pope; now Schiller, Scott, Longfellow, Körner; now Bret Harte or Kipling; now Shelley, or Herrick or Tennyson; now Poe and Coleridge; and again Emerson or Browning or Whitman. Sometimes one wishes to

read for the sake of contrast. To me Owen Wister is the writer I wish when I am hungry with the memories of lonely mountains, of vast sunny plains with seas of wind-rippled grass, of springing wild creatures, and lithe sun-tanned men who ride with utter ease on ungroomed, half-broken horses. But when I lived much in cow camps I often carried a volume of Swinburne, as a kind of antiseptic to alkali dust, tepid muddy water, frying-pan bread, sow-belly bacon, and the too-infrequent washing of sweat-drenched clothing.

Guiding child's reading

Fathers and mothers who are wise can train their children first to practice, and soon to like, the sustained mental application necessary to enjoy good books. They will do well also to give each boy or girl the mastery of at least some one foreign language, so that at least one other great literature, in addition to our own noble English literature, shall be open to him or her. Modern languages are taught so easily and readily that whoever really desires to learn one of them can soon achieve sufficient command of it to read ordinary books with reasonable ease; and then it is a mere matter of practice for anyone to become able thoroughly to enjoy the beauty and wisdom which knowledge of the new tongue brings.

Now and then one's soul thirsts for laughter. I cannot imagine anyone's taking a course in humorous writers, but just as little can I sympathize with the man who does not enjoy them at times—from Sydney Smith to John Phoenix and Artemus Ward, and from these to Stephen Leacock. Mark Twain at his best stands a little apart, almost as much so as Joel Chandler Harris. Oliver Wendell Holmes, of course, is the laughing philosopher, the humorist at his very highest, even if we use the word "humor" only in its most modern and narrow sense.

A man with a real fondness for books of various kinds will find that his varying moods determine which of these books he at the moment needs. On the afternoon when Stevenson represents the luxury of enjoyment it may safely be assumed that Gibbon will not. The mood that is met by Napier's "Peninsular War," or Marbot's memoirs, will certainly not be met by Haw-

thorne or Jane Austen. Parkman's "Montcalm and Wolfe," Motley's histories of the Dutch Republic, will hardly fill the soul on a day when one turns naturally to the "Heimskringla"; and there is a sense of disconnection if after the Heimskringla one takes up the "Oxford Book of French Verse."

Another matter which within certain rather wide limits each reader must settle for himself is the dividing line between (1) not knowing anything about current books, and (2) swamping one's soul in the sea of vapidity which overwhelms him who reads *only* "the last new books." **Current literature**

To me the heading employed by some reviewers when they speak of "books of the week" comprehensively damns both the books themselves and the reviewer who is willing to notice them. I would much rather see the heading "books of the year before last." A book of the year before last which is still worth noticing would probably be worth reading; but one only entitled to be called a book of the week had better be tossed into the wastebasket at once. Still, there are plenty of new books which are not of permanent value but which nevertheless are worth more or less careful reading; partly because it is well to know something of what especially interests the mass of our fellows, and partly because these books, although of ephemeral worth, may really set forth something genuine in a fashion which for the moment stirs the hearts of all of us.

* * * *

It would be hopeless to try to enumerate all the books I read, or even all the kinds. The foregoing is a very imperfect answer to a question which admits of only such an answer.

HISTORY OF A LITERARY RADICAL

By RANDOLPH BOURNE

Boyhood reading

For a man of culture, my friend Miro began his literary career in a singularly unpromising way. Potential statesmen in log-cabins might miraculously come in touch with all the great books of the world, but the days of Miro's young school life were passed in innocence of Homer or Dante or Shakespeare, or any of the other traditional mind-formers of the race. What Miro had for his nourishment, outside the Bible, which was a magical book that you must not drop on the floor, or his school-readers, which were like lightning flashes of unintelligible scenes, was the literature that his playmates lent him—exploits of British soldiers in Spain and the Crimea, the death-defying adventures of young filibusters in Cuba and Nicaragua. Miro gave them a languid perusing, and did not criticize their literary style. Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer somehow eluded him until he had finished college, and no fresher tale of adventure drifted into his complacent home until the era of "Richard Carvel" and "Janice Meredith" sharpened his wits and gave him a vague feeling that there was such a thing as literary art. The classics were stiffly enshrined behind glass doors that were very hard to open—at least Hawthorne and Irving and Thackeray were there, and Tennyson's and Scott's poems—but nobody ever discussed them or looked at them. Miro's busy elders were taken up with the weekly

From *The History of a Literary Radical,* by Randolph Bourne, 1920. By special arrangement with the publishers, B. W. Huebsch, Inc.

Randolph Bourne, a graduate of Columbia who had become a literary freelance, died in 1918 at the age of thirty-two. His earlier essays appeared particularly in *The Atlantic Monthly.* He was at different times a contributing editor of *The New Republic, The Seven Arts,* and *The Dial.* "*Place aux jeunes* might have been his motto": writes his friend, Van Wyck Brooks, in the introduction to our volume, "he seemed indeed the flying wedge of the younger generation itself." Bourne's writing, continues Mr. Brooks, might well have been actuated by the thought once expressed by Ibsen: "My opinion is that at the present time it is of no use to wield one's weapons *for* art; one must simply turn them *against* what is hostile to art." A thought that is at the heart of many a destructive critic of our day.

Outlook and *Independent* and *Christian Work,* and felt they were doing much for Miro when they provided him and his sister with *St. Nicholas* and *The Youth's Companion.* It was only that Miro saw the black books looking at him accusingly from the case, and a rudimentary conscience, slipping easily over from Calvinism to culture, forced him solemnly to grapple with "The Scarlet Letter" or "Marmion." All he remembers is that the writers of these books he browsed among used a great many words and made a great fuss over shadowy offenses and conflicts and passions that did not even stimulate his imagination with sufficient force to cause him to ask his elders what it was all about. Certainly the filibusters were easier.

Required reading

At school Miro was early impressed with the vast dignity of the literary works and names he was compelled to learn. Shakespeare and Goethe and Dante lifted their plaster heads frowningly above the teacher's, as they perched on shelves about the room. Much was said of the greatness of literature. But the art of phonetics and the complications of grammar swamped Miro's early school years. It was not until he reached the High School that literature began really to assume that sacredness which he had heretofore felt only for Holy Scripture. His initiation into culture was made almost a religious mystery by the conscientious and harassed teacher. As the Deadwood Boys and Henty and David Harum slipped away from Miro's soul in the presence of Milton's "Comus" and Burke "On Conciliation," a cultural devoutness was engendered in him that never really died. At first it did not take Miro beyond the stage where your conscience is strong enough to make you uncomfortable, but not strong enough to make you do anything about it. Miro did not actually become an omnivorous reader of great books. But he was filled with a rich grief that the millions pursued cheap and vulgar fiction instead of the best that has been thought and said in the world. Miro indiscriminately bought cheap editions of the English classics and read them with a certain patient incomprehension.

The dead classics

As for the dead classics, they came to Miro from the hands of his teachers with a prestige even vaster than the books of his native tongue. No doubt ever entered his head that four years of Latin and three years of Greek, an hour a day, were the important preparation he needed for his future as an American citizen. No doubt ever hurt him that the world into which he would pass would be a world where, as his teacher said, Latin and Greek were a solace to the aged, a quickener of taste, a refreshment after manual labor, and a clue to the general knowledge of all human things. Miro would as soon have doubted the rising of the sun as have doubted the wisdom of these serious, puckered women who had the precious manipulation of his cultural upbringing in their charge. Miro was a bright, if a rather vague, little boy, and a fusion of brightness and docility gave him high marks in the school where we went together.

No one ever doubted that these marks expressed Miro's assimilation of the books we poured over. But he told me later that he had never really known what he was studying. Cæsar, Virgil, Cicero, Xenophon, Homer, were veiled and misty experiences to him. His mind was a moving present, obliterating each day what it had read the day before, and piercing into a no more comprehended future. He could at no time have given any intelligible account of Æneas's wanderings, or what Cicero was really inveighing against. The Iliad was even more obscure. The only thing which impressed him deeply was an expurgated passage, which he looked up somewhere else and found to be about Mars and Venus caught in the golden bed. Cæsar seemed to be at war, and Xenophon wandering somewhere in Asia Minor, with about the same lengthiness and hardship as Miro suffered in reading him. The trouble, Miro thought afterwards, was that these books were to his mind flickering lights in a vast jungle of ignorance. He does not remember marvelling at the excessive dulness of the stories themselves. He plodded his faithful way, using them as his conscientious teachers did, as exercises in language. He looked on Virgil and Cicero as essentially problems in disentangling words which had un-

accountably gotten into a bizarre order, and in recognizing certain rather amusing and ingenious combinations, known as "constructions." Why these words took so irritating an order Miro never knew, but he always connected the problem with those algebraic puzzles he had elsewhere to unravel. Virgil's words were further complicated by being arranged in lines which one had to "scan." Miro was pleased with the rhythm, and there were stanzas that had a roll of their own. But the inexorable translating that had to go on tore all this fabric of poetry to pieces. His translations were impeccable, but, as he never wrote them down, he had never before his eyes the consecutive story.

Translations Miro never saw. He knew that they were implements of deadly sin that boys used to cheat with. His horror of them was such as a saint might feel towards a parody of the Bible. Just before Miro left school, his sister in a younger class began to read a prose translation of the Odyssey, and Miro remembers the scorn with which he looked down on so sneaking an entrance into the temple of light. He knew that not everyone could study Latin and Greek, and he learned to be proud of his knowledge. When at last he had passed his examinations for college—his Latin composition and grammar, his syntax and his sight-reading, and his Greek composition and grammar, his Greek syntax and sight-reading, and his translation of Gallic battles and Anabatic frosts, and Dido's farewell and Cicero's objurgations—his zealous rage did not abate. He even insisted on reading the Bucolics, while he was away on his vacation, and a book or two in the Odyssey. His family was a little chilled by his studiousness, but he knew well that he was laying up cultural treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, neither do thieves break in and steal.

The classics at college

Arrived at college, Miro expanded his cultural interests on the approved lines. He read Horace and Plato, Lysias and Terence, impartially, with faithful conscience. Horace was the most exciting because of the parodies that were beginning to appear in the cleverer newspapers. Miro scarcely knew whether to

be amused or shocked at "Odi Persicos" or "Integer Vitæ" done into current slang. The professors, mild-mannered men who knew their place and kept it, never mentioned these impudent adventures, but for Miro it was the first crack in his Ptolemaic system of reverences. There came a time when his mind began to feel replete, when this heavy pushing through the opaque medium of dead language began to fatigue him. He should have been able to read fluently, but there were always turning up new styles, new constructions, to plague him. Latin became to him like a constant diet of beefsteak, and Greek like a constant diet of fine wheaten bread. They lost their taste. These witty poets and ostentatious orators—what were they all about? What was their background? Where did they fit into Miro's life? The professors knew some history, but what did that history mean? Miro found himself surfeited and dissatisfied. He began to look furtively at translations to get some better English than he was able to provide. The hair-splittings of Plato began to bore him when he saw them in crystal-clear English, and not muffled in the original Greek. His apostasy had begun.

The English classics

It was not much better in his study of English literature. Miro was given a huge anthology, a sort of press-clipping bureau of *belles-lettres,* from Chaucer to Arthur Symons. Under the direction of a professor who was laying out a career for himself as a poet—or "modern singer," as he expressed it—the class went briskly through the centuries, sampling their genius and tasting the various literary flavors. The enterprise reminded Miro of those books of woollen samples which one looks through when one is to have a suit of clothes made. But in this case, the student did not even have the pleasure of seeing the suit of clothes. All that was expected of him, apparently, was that he should become familiar, from these microscopic pieces, with the different textures and patterns. The great writers passed before his mind like figures in a crowded street. There was no time for preferences. Indeed, the professor strove diligently to give each writer his just due. How was one to appreciate the great thoughts and the great styles if

one began to choose violently between them, or attempt any discrimination on grounds of their peculiar congeniality for one's own soul? Criticism had to spurn such subjectivity, scholarship could not be wilful. The neatly arranged book of "readings," with its medicinal doses of inspiration, became the symbol of Miro's education.

These early years of college did not deprive Miro of his cultural loyalty, but they deadened his appetite. Although almost inconceivably docile, he found himself being bored. He had come from school a serious boy, with more than a touch of priggishness in him, and a vague aspiration to be a "man of letters." He found himself becoming a collector of literary odds-and-ends. If he did not formulate this feeling clearly, he at least knew. He found that the literary life was not as interesting as he had expected. He sought no adventures. When he wrote, it was graceful lyrics or polite criticisms of William Collins or Charles Lamb. These canonized saints of culture still held the field for Miro, however. There was nothing between them and that popular literature of the day that all good men bemoaned. Classic or popular, "highbrow" or "lowbrow," this was the choice, and Miro unquestioningly took the orthodox heaven. In 1912 the most popular of Miro's English professors had never heard of Galsworthy, and another was creating a flurry of scandal in the department by recommending Chesterton to his classes. It would scarcely have been in college that Miro would have learned of an escape from the closed dichotomy of culture. Bored with the "classic," and frozen with horror at the "popular," his career as a man of culture must have come to a dragging end if he had not been suddendly liberated by a chance lecture which he happened to hear while he was at home for the holidays.

A literary radical

The literary radical who appeared before the Lyceum Club of Miro's village was none other than Professor William Lyon Phelps, and it it to that evening of cultural audacity Miro thinks he owes all his later emancipation. The lecturer grappled with the "modern novel," and tossed Hardy, Tolstoi, Tur-

genev, Meredith, even Trollope, into the minds of the charmed audience with such effect that the virgin shelves of the village library were ravished for days to come by the eager minds upon whom these great names dawned for the first time. "Jude the Obscure" and "Resurrection" were of course kept officially away from the vulgar, but Miro managed to find "Smoke" and "Virgin Soil" and "Anna Karenina" and "The Warden" and "A Pair of Blue Eyes" and "The Return of the Native." Later at college he explored the forbidden shelves. It was as if some devout and restless saint had suddenly been introduced to the Apocrypha. A new world was opened to Miro that was neither "classic" nor "popular," and yet which came to one under the most unimpeachable auspices. There was, at first, it is true, an air of illicit adventure about the enterprise. The lecturer who made himself the missionary of such vigorous and piquant doctrine had the air of being a heretic, or at least a boy playing out of school. But Miro himself returned to college a cultural revolutionist. His orthodoxies crumbled. He did not try to reconcile the new with the old. He applied pick and dynamite to the whole structure of the canon. Irony, humor, tragedy, sensuality, suddenly appeared to him as literary qualities in forms that he could understand. They were like oxygen to his soul.

If these qualities were in the books he had been reading, he had never felt them. The expurgated sample-books he had studied had passed too swiftly over the Elizabethans to give him a sense of their lustiness. Miro immersed himself voluptuously in the pessimism of Hardy. He fed on the poignant torture of Tolstoi. While he was reading "Resurrection," his class in literature was making an "intensive" study of Tennyson. It was too much. Miro rose in revolt. He forswore literary courses forever, dead rituals in which anæmic priests mumbled their trite critical commentary. Miro did not know that to naughtier critics even Mr. Phelps might eventually seem a pale and timid Gideon, himself stuck in moral sloughs. He was grateful enough for that blast of trumpets which made his own scholastic walls fall down.

The next stage in Miro's cultural life was one of frank revolt. He became as violent as a heretic as he had been docile as a believer. Modern novels merely started the rift that widened into modern ideas. The professors were of little use. Indeed, when Miro joined a group of radicals who had started a new college paper, a relentless vendetta began with the teachers. Miro and his friends threw over everything that was mere literature. Social purpose must shine from any writing that was to rouse their enthusiasm. Literary flavor was to be permissible only where it made vivid high and revolutionary thought. Tolstoi became their god, Wells their high priest. Chesterton infuriated them. They wrote violent assaults upon him, which began in imitation of his cool paradoxicality and ended in incoherent ravings. There were so many enemies to their new fervor that they scarcely knew where to begin. There were not only the old tables of stone to destroy, but there were new and threatening prophets of the eternal verities who had to be exposed. The nineteenth century which they had studied must be weeded of its nauseous moralists. The instructors consulted together how they might put down the revolt, and bring these sinners back to the faith of cultural scripture.

Miro in revolt

It was of no avail. In a short time Miro had been converted from an aspiration for the career of a cultivated "man of letters" to a fiery zeal for artistic and literary propaganda in the service of radical ideas. One of the results of this conversion was the discovery that he really had no standards of critical taste. Miro had been reverential so long that he had felt no preferences. Everything that was classic had to be good to him. But now that he had thrown away the books that were stamped with the mark of the classic mint, and was dealing with the raw materials of letters, he had to become a critic and make selection. It was not enough that a book should be radical. Some of the books he read, though impeccably revolutionary as to ideas, were clearly poor as literature. His muffled taste began to assert itself. He found himself impressionable where be-

His own critic

fore he had been only mildly acquisitive. The literature of revolt and free speculation fired him into a state of spiritual explosiveness. All that he read now stood out in brighter colors and in sharper outlines than before. As he reached a better balance, he began to feel the vigor of literary form, the value of sincerity and freshness of style. He began to look for them keenly in everything he read. It was long before Miro realized that enthusiasm not docility had made him critical. He became a little proud of his sensitive and discriminating reactions to the modern and the unsifted.

College teachers of literature

This pusuit had to take place without any help from the college. After Miro graduated, it is true that it became the fashion to study literature as the record of ideas and not merely as a canon of sacred books to be analyzed, commented upon, and absorbed. But no dent was made upon the system in Miro's time, and, the inventory of English criticism not going beyond Stevenson, no college course went beyond Stevenson. The Elizabethans had been exhumed and fumigated, but the most popular attention went to the gallery of Victorians, who combined moral soundness with literary beauty, and were therefore considered wholesome food for young men. The instructors all remained in the state of reverence which saw all things good that had been immemorially taught. Miro's own teacher was a fragile, earnest young man, whose robuster parents had evidently seized upon his nature as a fortunate pledge of what the family might produce in the way of an intellectual flower that should surpass in culture and gentility the ambitions of his parents. His studiousness, hopeless for his father's career as grocer, had therefore been capitalized into education.

The product now shone forth as one of the most successful and promising younger instructors in the department. He knew his subject. Card-indexes filled his room, covering in detail the works, lives, and deaths of the illustrious persons whom he expounded, as well as everything that had been said about them in the way of appreciation or interpretation. An endless number of lectures and courses could be

made from this bountiful store. He never tried to write himself, but he knew all about the different kinds of writing, and when he corrected the boys' themes he knew infallibly what to tell them to avoid. Miro's vagaries scandalized his teacher all the more because during his first year in college Miro had been generally noticed as one with the proper sobriety and scholarly patience to graduate into a similar priestly calling. Miro found scant sympathy in the young man. To the latter, literary studies were a science not an art, and they were to be treated with somewhat the same cold rigor of delimitation and analysis as any other science. Miro felt his teacher's recoil at the idea that literature was significant only as the expression of personality or as interpretation of some social movement. Miro saw how uneasy he became when he was confronted with current literature. It was clear that Miro's slowly growing critical sense had not a counterpart in the scholastic mind.

When Miro and his friends abandoned literary studies, they followed after the teachers of history and philosophy, intellectual arenas of which the literary professors seemed scandalously ignorant. At this ignorance Miro boiled with contempt. Here were the profitable clues that would give meaning to dusty literary scholarship, but the scholars had not the wits to seize them. They lived along, playing what seemed to Miro a rather dreary game, when they were not gaping reverently at ideas and forms which they scarcely had the genuine personality to appreciate. Miro felt once and for all free of these mysteries and reverences. He was to know the world as it has been and as it is. He was to put literature into its proper place, making all "culture" serve its apprenticeship for him as interpretation of things larger than itself, of the course of individual lives and the great tides of society.

Miro's later cultural life is not without interest. When he had finished college and his architectural course, and was making headway in his profession, his philosophy of the intellectual life began to straighten itself out. Rapid as his surren-

der of orthodoxy had been, it had taken him some time to live down that early education. He found now that he would have to live down his heresies also, and get some coherent system of tastes that was his own and not the fruit of either docility or the zeal of propaganda.

Need of standards of taste

The old battles that were still going on helped Miro to realize his modern position. It was a queer, musty quarrel, but it was enlisting minds from all classes and of all intellectual fibers. The "classics" were dying hard, as Miro recognized whenever he read, in the magazines, attacks on the "new education." He found that professors were still taken seriously who declared in passion that without the universal study of the Latin language in American schools all conceptions of taste, standards, criticism, the historic sense itself, would vanish from the earth. He found that even as late as 1917 professional men were gathering together in solemn conclave and buttressing the "value of the classics" in a variety of vocations. Miro was amused at the fact that the mighty studies once pressed upon him so uncritically should now require, like the patent medicines, testimonials as to their virtue. Bank presidents, lawyers, and editors had taken the Latin language regularly for years, and had found its effects painless and invigorating. He could not escape the unconscious satire that such plump and prosperous Americans expressed when they thought it admirable to save their cherished intellectual traditions in any such fashion.

Failure of the classics

Other conservatives Miro saw to be abandoning the line of opposition to science, only to fall back on the line of a defensive against "psuedo-science," as they seemed to call whatever intellectual interests had not yet become indubitably reputable. It was a line which would hold them rather strongly for a time, Miro thought, because so many of the cultural revolutionists agreed with them in hating some of these arrogant and mechanical psychologies and sociologies that reduced life to figures or organisms. But Miro felt also how obstructive was their fight. If the "classics" had done little for him ex-

cept to hold his mind in an uncomprehending prison, and fetter his spontaneous taste, they seemed to have done little more for even the thorough scholars. When professors had devoted scholarly lives to the "classics" only to exhibit in their own polemics none of the urbanity and intellectual command which were supposed by the believer somehow to rub off automatically on the faithful student, Miro had to conclude an absence of causal connection between the "classics" and the able modern mind. When, moreover, critical power or creative literary work became almost extinct among these defenders of the "old education," Miro felt sure that a revolution was needed in the materials and attitudes of "culture."

The case of the defenders was all the weaker because their enemies were not wanton infidels, ignorant of the holy places they profaned. They were rather cultural "Modernists," reforming the church from within. They had the classic background, these young vandals, but they had escaped from its flat and unoriented surface. Abreast of the newer objective, impersonal standards of thinking, they saw the weakness of these archaic minds which could only appeal to vested interests in culture and testimonials from successful men.

At the end of an era

The older critics had long since disavowed the intention of discriminating among current writers. These men, who had to have an Academy to protect them, lumped the younger writers of verse and prose together as "anarchic" and "naturalistic," and had become, in these latter days, merely peevish and querulous, protesting in favor of standards that no longer represented our best values. Every one, in Miro's time, bemoaned the lack of critics, but the older critics seemed to have lost all sense of hospitality and to have become tired and a little spitefully disconsolate, while the newer ones were too intent on their crusades against puritanism and philistinism to have time for a constructive pointing of the way.

Miro had a very real sense of standing at the end of an era. He and his friends had lived down both their old orthodoxies of the classics and their new orthodoxies of propaganda. Gone were the priggishness and self-consciousness

which had marked their teachers. The new culture would be more personal than the old, but it would not be held as a personal property. It would be democratic in the sense that it would represent each person's honest spontaneous taste. The old attitude was only speciously democratic. The assumption was that if you pressed your material long enough and winningly enough upon your culturable public, they would acquire it. But the material was something handed down, not grown in the garden of their own appreciations. Under these conditions the critic and appreciator became a mere impersonal register of orthodox opinion. The cultivated person, in conforming his judgments to what was authoritatively taught him, was really a member of the herd—a cultivated herd, it is true, but still a herd. It was the mass that spoke through the critic and not his own discrimination. These authoritative judgments might, of course, have come—probably had come—to the herd through discerning critics, but in Miro's time judgment in the schools had petrified. One believed not because one felt the original discernment, but because one was impressed by the weight and reputability of opinion. At least so it seemed to Miro.

Now just as the artists had become tired of conventions and were breaking through into new and personal forms, so Miro saw the younger critics breaking through these cultural conventions. To the elders the result would seem mere anarchy. But Miro's attitude did not want to destroy, it merely wanted to rearrange the materials. He wanted no more second-hand appreciations. No one's cultural store was to include anything that one could not be enthusiastic about. One's acquaintance with the best that had been said and thought should be encouraged—in Miro's ideal school—to follow the lines of one's temperament. Miro, having thrown out the old gods, found them slowly and properly coming back to him. Some would always repel him, others he hoped to understand eventually. But if it took wisdom to write the great books, did it not also take wisdom to understand them? Even the Latin writers he hoped to recover, with the aid of translations. But why

Old gods returning

bother with Greek, when you could get Euripides in the marvellous verse of Gilbert Murray? Miro was willing to believe that no education was complete without at least an inoculation of the virus of the two orthodoxies that he was transcending.

The new critics

As Miro looked around the American scene, he wondered where the critics were to come from. He saw, on the one hand, Mr. Mencken and Mr. Dreiser and their friends, going heavily forth to battle with the Philistines, glorying in pachydermatous vulgarisms that hurt the polite and cultivated young men of the old school. And he saw these violent critics, in their rage against puritanism, becoming themselves moralists, with the same bigotry and tastelessness as their enemies. No, these would never do. On the other hand, he saw Mr. Stuart P. Sherman, in his youthful if somewhat belated ardor, revolting so conscientiously against the "naturalism" and crude expression of current efforts that, in his defense of *belles-lettres,* of the fine tradition of literary art, he himself became a moralist of the intensest brand, and as critic plumped for Arnold Bennett, because the clever man had a feeling for the proprieties of human conduct. No, Mr. Sherman would do even less adequately. His fine sympathies were as much out of the current as was the specious classicism of Professor Shorey. He would have to look for the critics among the young men who had an abounding sense of life, as well as a feeling for literary form. They would be men who had not been content to live on their cultural inheritance, but had gone out into the modern world and amassed a fresh fortune of their own. They would be men who were not squeamish, who did not feel the delicate differences between "animal" and "human" conduct, who were enthusiastic about Mark Twain and Gorki as well as Romain Rolland, and at the same time were thrilled by Copeau's theater.

Culture and appreciation

Where was a better program for culture, for any kind of literary art? Culture as a living effort, a driving attempt both at sincere expression and at the comprehension of sincere expression wherever it was found! Appreciation to be as far removed from the "I know what I like!" as from the textbook impeccability

of taste! If each mind sought its own along these lines, would not many find themselves agreed? Miro insisted on liking Amy Lowell's attempt to outline the tendencies in American poetry in a form which made clear the struggles of contemporary men and women with the tradition and against "every affectation of the mind." He began to see in the new class-consciousness of poets the ending of that old division which "culture" made between the chosen people and the gentiles. We were now to form little pools of workers and appreciators of similar temperaments and tastes. The little magazines that were starting up became voices for these new communities of sentiment. Miro thought that perhaps at first it was right to adopt a tentative superciliousness towards the rest of the world, so that both Mr. Mencken with his shudders at the vulgar Demos and Mr. Sherman with his obsession with the sanely and wholesomely American might be shut out from influence. Instead of fighting the Philistine in the name of freedom, or fighting the vulgar iconoclast in the name of wholesome human notions, it might be better to write for one's own band of comprehenders, in order that one might have something genuine with which to appeal to both the mob of the "bourgeois" and the ferocious vandals who had been dividing the field among them. Far better a quarrel among these intensely self-conscious groups than the issues that had filled *The Atlantic* and *The Nation* with their dreary obsolescence. Far better for the mind that aspired towards "culture" to be told not to conform or worship, but to search out its group, its own temperamental community of sentiment, and there deepen appreciations through sympathetic contact.

It was no longer a question of being hospitable towards the work of other countries. Miro found the whole world open to him, in these days, through the enterprise of publishers. He and his friends felt more sympathetic with certain groups in France and Russia than they did with the variegated "prominent authors" of their own land. Winston Churchill as a novelist came to seem more of an alien than Artzybashev. The fact of culture being international had been followed by a sense of its being. The old cultural atti-

tude had been hospitable enough, but it had imported its alien culture in the form of "comparative literature." It was hospitable only in trying to mould its own taste to the orthodox canons abroad. The older American critic was mostly interested in getting the proper rank and reverence for what he borrowed. The new critic will take what suits his community of sentiment. He will want to link up not with the foreign canon, but with that group which is nearest in spirit with the effort he and his friends are making. The American has to work to interpret and portray the life he knows. He cannot be international—and must be—in the sense that he works with a certain hopeful vision of a "young world," and with certain ideal values upon which the younger men, stained and revolted by war, in all countries are agreeing.

Toward a new classicism

Miro wonders sometimes whether the direction in which he is tending will not bring him around the circle again to a new classicism. The last stage in the history of the man of culture will be that "classic" which he did not understand and which his mind spent its youth in overthrowing. But it will be a classicism far different from that which was so unintelligently handed down to him in the American world. It will be something worked out and lived into. Looking into the future, he will have to do what Van Wyck Brooks calls "inventing a usable past." Finding little in the tradition that is not tainted with sweetness and light and burdened with the terrible patronage of bourgeois society, the new classicist will yet rescue Thoreau and Whitman and Mark Twain and try to tap through them a certain eternal human tradition of abounding vitality and moral freedom, and also build out the future. If the classic means power with restraint, vitality with harmony, a fusion of intellect and feeling, and a keen sense of the artistic conscience, then the revolutionary world is coming out into the classic. When Miro sees behind the minds of *The Masses* group a desire for form and for expressive beauty, and sees the radicals following Jacques Copeau and reading Chekhov, he smiles at the thought of the American critics, young and old, who do not know yet that they are dead.

THE EXPERT BOOK REVIEWER

By ARNOLD BENNETT

I come now to a question only less delicate than that of the conflict of sexes in journalism—the question of reviewing, which, however, I shall treat with more freedom. If I have an aptitude for anything at all in letters, it is for criticism.

A born critic

Whenever I read a work of imagination, I am instantly filled with ideas concerning it; I form definite views about its merit or demerit, and having formed them, I hold those views with strong conviction. Denial of them rouses me; I must thump the table in support of them; I must compel people to believe that what I say is true; I cannot argue without getting serious in spite of myself. In literature, but in nothing else, I am a propagandist; I am not content to keep my opinion and let others keep theirs. To have a worthless book in my house (save in the way of business), to know that any friend of mine is enjoying it, actually distresses me. That book must go, the pretensions of that book must be exposed, if I am to enjoy peace of mind. Some may suspect that I am guilty here of the affectation of a pose. Really it is not so. I often say to myself, after the heat of an argument, a denunciation, or a defense: "What does it matter, fool? The great mundane movement will continue, the terrestrial ball will roll on." But will it? Something must matter, after all, or the mundane movement emphatically would not continue. And the triumph of a good book, and the ignominy of a bad book, matter to me.

The criticism of imaginative prose literature, which is my specialty, is an over-crowded and not very remunerative field of activity. Every intelligent mediocrity in Fleet Street thinks he can appraise a novel, and most of them, judging from the papers, seem to make the attempt. And so quite naturally the pay is as a rule contemptible. To enter this field, therefore, with the intention of tilling it to a profitable fiscal harvest is

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See footnote, pp. 29-30, on Mr. Bennett's literary career.

an enterprise in the nature of a forlorn hope. I undertook it in innocence and high spirits, from a profound instinct. I had something to say. Of late years I have come to the conclusion that the chief characteristic of all bad reviewing is the absence of genuine conviction, of a message, of a clear doctrine; the incompetent reviewer has to invent his opinions.

I succeeded at first by dint of ignoring one of the elementary laws of journalism, to-wit, that editors do not accept reviews from casual outsiders. I wrote a short review of a French work and sent it to "The Illustrated London News," always distinguished for its sound literary criticism. Any expert would have told me that I was wasting labour and postage. Nevertheless the review was accepted, printed, and handsomely paid for. I then sent a review of a new edition of Edward Carpenter's "Towards Democracy" to an evening paper, and this, too, achieved publicity. After that, for some months, I made no progress. And then I had the chance of a literary *causerie* in a weekly paper; eight hundred words a week, thirty pounds a year. I wrote a sample article—and I well remember the incredible pains I took to show that Mrs. Lynn Linton's "In Haste and at Leisure" was thoroughly bad—but my article was too "literary." The editor with thirty pounds a year to spend on literary criticism went in search of a confection less austere than mine. But I was not baulked for long. The literary column of my own paper (of which I was then only assistant-editor) was presented to me on my assurance that I could liven it up: seven hundred words a week, at twelve and six-pence. The stuff that I wrote was entirely unsuited to the taste of our public; but it attracted attention from the seats of the mighty, and it also attracted—final triumph of the despised reviewer!—publishers' advertisements. I wrote this column every week for some years. And I got another one to do, by asking for it. Then I selected some of my best and wittiest reviews, and sent them to the editor of a well-known organ of culture with a note suggesting that my pen ought to add to the charms of his paper. An editor of sagacity and perspicacity, he admitted the soundness of my suggestion without cavil, and the result was mutually satis-

factory. At the present time (1900) I am continually refusing critical work. I reckon that on an average I review a book and a fraction of a book every day of my life, Sundays included.

The process of book reviewing

"Then," says the man in the street inevitably, "you must spend a very large part of each day in reading new books." Not so. I fit my reviewing into the odd unoccupied corners of my time, the main portions of which are given to the manufacture of novels, plays, short stories, and longer literary essays. I am an author of several sorts. I have various strings to my bow. And I know my business. I write half a million words a year. That is not excessive; but it is passable industry, and nowadays I make a point of not working too hard. The half million words contain one or two books, one or two plays, and numerous trifles not connected with literary criticism; only about a hundred and fifty thousand words are left for reviewing.

The sense of justice of the man in the street is revolted. "You do not read through all the books that you pretend to criticize?" he hints. I have never known a reviewer to answer this insinuation straightforwardly in print; but I will answer it: No, I do not.

And the man in the street says, shocked: "You are unjust."

And I reply: "Not at all. I am merely an expert."

The expert book taster

The performances of the expert in any craft will surprise and amaze the inexpert. Come with me into my study and I will surprise and amaze you. Have I been handling novels for bread-and-cheese all these years and not learnt to judge them by any process quicker than that employed by you who merely pick up a novel for relaxation after dinner? Assuming that your taste is fairly sound, let us be confronted with the same new novel, and I will show you, though you are a quick reader, that I can anticipate your judgment of that novel by a minimum of fifty-five minutes. The title-page—that conjunction of the title, the name of the author, and the name of the publisher—speaks to me, telling me all sorts of things. The very chapter-headings deliver a message of style. The narrative everywhere dis-

closes to me the merits and defects of the writer; no author ever lived who could write a page without giving himself away. The whole book, open it where I will, is murmurous with indications for me. In the case of nine books of ten, to read them through would be not a work of supererogation—it would be a sinful waste of time on the part of a professional reviewer. The majority of novels—and all these remarks apply only to novels—hold no surprise for the professional reviewer. He can foretell them as the nautical almanac foretells astronomical phenomena. The customary established popular author seldom or never deviates from his appointed track, and it is the customary established popular author upon whom chiefly the reviewer is a parasite. New authors occasionally cause the reviewer to hesitate in his swift verdicts, especially when the verdict is inclined to be favourable. Certain publishers (that is to say, their "readers") have a knack of acquiring new authors who can imitate real excellence in an astonishing manner. In some cases the reviewer must needs deliberately "get into" the book, in order not to be deceived by appearances, in order to decide positively whether the author has genuine imaginative power, and if so, whether that power is capable of a sustained effort. But these difficult instances are rare. There remains the work of the true artist, the work that the reviewer himself admires and enjoys: say one book in fifty, or one in a hundred. The reviewer reads that through.

Brief reflection will convince any one that it would be economically impossible for the reviewer to fulfil this extraordinary behest of the man of the street to read every book through. Take your London morning paper, and observe the column devoted to fiction of the day. It comprises some fifteen hundred words, and the reviewer receives, if he is well paid, three guineas for it. Five novels are discussed. Those novels will amount to sixteen hundred pages of printed matter. Reading at the rate of eight words a second, the reviewer would accomplish two pages a minute, and sixteen hundred pages in thirteen hours and twenty minutes. Add an hour and forty minutes for the composition, and we have fifteen hours, or

two days' work. Do you imagine that the reviewer of a London morning paper is going to hire out his immortal soul, his experience, his mere skill, at the rate of thirty-one and sixpence per day on irregular jobs? Scarcely. He will earn his three guineas inside three hours, and it will be well and truly earned. As a journeyman author, with the ability and inclination to turn my pen in any direction at request, I long ago established a rule never to work for less than ten shillings an hour on piecework. If an editor commissioned an article, he received from me as much fundamental brain power and as much time as the article demanded—up to the limit of his pay in terms of hours at ten shillings apiece. But each year I raise my price per hour. Of course, when I am working on my own initiative, for the sole advancement of my artistic reputation, I ignore finance and think of glory alone. It cannot, however, be too clearly understood that the professional author, the man who depends entirely on his pen for the continuance of breath, and whose income is at the mercy of an illness or a headache, is eternally compromising between glory and something more edible and warmer at nights. He labours in the first place for food, shelter, tailors, a woman, European travel, horses, stalls at the opera, good cigars, ambrosial evenings in restaurants; and he gives glory the best chance he can. I am not speaking of geniuses with a mania for posterity; I am speaking of human beings.

To return and to conclude this chapter. I feel convinced—nay, I know—that on the whole novelists get a little more than justice at the hands of their critics. I can recall many instances in which my praise has, in the light of further consideration, exceeded the deserts of a book; but very, very few in which I have cast a slur on genuine merit. Critics usually display a tendency towards a too generous kindness, particularly Scottish reviewers; it is almost a rule of the vocation. Most authors, I think, recognize this pleasing fact. It is only the minority, rabid for everlasting laudation, who carp; and, carping, demand the scalps of multiple-reviewers as a terrible example and warning to the smaller fry.

* * * *

Just what are the native qualities of Mr. Bennett, the literary expert, and how he developed them, or they him, even the casual reader will be interested to know. Speaking of himself at twenty-three, when he knew little literature but was beginning to seem literary, he mentions his chief endowments. "Three qualities I did possess, and on these three qualities I have traded ever since. First, an omnivorous and tenacious memory (now, alas, effete!)—the kind of memory that remembers how much London spends per day in cab fares just as easily as the order of Shakespeare's plays or the stock anecdotes of Shelley and Byron. Second, a naturally sound taste in literature. [One envies that self-confidence which thus makes all disputing about tastes unnecessary!] And third, the invaluable, despicable, disingenuous journalistic faculty of seeming to know much more than one does know."

Mr. Bennett lays no claim to the artistic temperament; rather, he has always been a man of affairs, one of the affairs being now and again to convince the public that it wanted what it thought it didn't want. His first absorption was in water-coloring which with him never became art; his next in newspaper writing. He was not a child prodigy such as we hear of nowadays: at eleven he wrote some verses and a prose story that he has not thought worthy of reprinting. But a revealing experience of his childhood should not be passed over. "I was six or so when 'The Ugly Duckling' aroused in me the melancholy of life, gave me to see the deep sadness which pervades all romance, beauty, and adventure. I laughed heartily at the old hen-bird's wise remark that the world extended past the next field and much farther; I could perceive the humour of that. But when the ugly duckling at last flew away on his strong pinions, and when he met the swans and was accepted as an equal, then I felt sorrowful, agreeably sorrowful. It seemed to me that nothing could undo, atone for, the grief and humiliations of the false duckling's early youth. I brooded over the injustice of his misfortunes for days, and the swans who welcomed him struck me as proud, cold, and supercilious in their politeness. I have never read 'The Ugly Duckling' since those days. It survives in my memory as a long and complex narrative, crowded with vague and mysterious allusions, and wet with the tears of things. No novel—it was a prodigious novel for me—has since more deliciously disturbed me, not even *On the Eve* or *Lost Illusions.*" (*The Truth About an Author,* pp. 10-11.)

Mr. Bennett does not remember much of the reading of his youth. "At twenty-one I know I had read almost nothing of Scott, Jane Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontés, and George Eliot. An adolescence devoted to water-colours has therefore made it forever impossible for me to emulate, in my functions of critic, the allusive Langism of Mr. Andrew Lang; but on the other hand, it has conferred on me the rare advantages of being in a position to approach the classics with a mind entirely unprejudiced by early recollections. Thus I read *David Copperfield* for the first time at thirty, after I had written a book or two and some hundreds of articles myself. The one author whom as a youth I 'devoured' was Ouida, creator of the incomparable Strathmore, the Strathmore upon whose wrath the sun unfortunately went down. I loved Ouida much for the impassioned nobility of her style, but more for the scenes of gilded vice into which she introduced me. She it was who inspired me with that taste for *liaisons* under pink lampshades which I shall always have, but which, owing to a puritanical ancestry and upbringing, I shall never be able to satisfy." (*Ibid.* p. 20.)

After these romantic beginnings, Mr. Bennett must paint the following self-portrait: "I who now reside permanently on that curious fourth-dimensional planet which we call the literary world; I, who follow the incredible parasitic trade of talking about what people have done, who am a sort of public weighing-machine upon which bookish wares must halt before passing from the factory to the consumer; I, who habitually think in articles, who exist by phrases; I, who seize life at the pen's point and callously wrest from it the material which I torture into confections styled essays, short stories, novels, and plays; who perceive in passion chiefly a theme, and in tragedy chiefly a 'situation'; who am so morbidly avaricious of beauty that I insist on finding it where even it is not; I, in short, who have been victimized to the last degrgee by a literary temperament, and glory in my victimhood, am going to trace as well as I can the phenomena of the development of that idiosyncrasy from its inception to such maturity as it has attained." (*Ibid.* p. 5.)—*Editor.*

Professor Brander Matthews has more than once insisted that criticism and book reviewing are two distinct things, the former devoted to evaluation of the fixed stars of the past, the latter concerned with the more or less nebulous or meteoric visitors of the present day. He cites with approval the opinion that book reviewers cannot distinguish or appreciate diamonds in the rough or gold in bars, being dealers, and knowing only that money which is legal tender—literature that has been stamped by time. " 'Their criticism has a pair of scales, but it has no crucible and no touchstone.' There we have a clear statement of the difference between true criticism and mere book reviewing—the book reviewing which has to deal with diamonds in the rough and gold in bars, and which can never be sure that the diamonds are not paste and that the gold bars are not 'gold bricks'."

"Criticism, I should like permission to say again, is a department of literature, and book reviewing is (and must be) a department of journalism. The great critics are so esteemed partly because they perceived this distinction, and the good book reviewers are good because they also perceive it. The task of the book reviewer, even if it is humble, is honorable; and it is his privilege to point out to the readers of the periodical to which he contributes what seem to him at the moment the merits and the demerits of such contemporary books as he may think important enough or significant enough to deserve careful consideration. It is for the benefit of these readers that he always writes—never for the benefit of the authors. And I have never known an author who derived any benefit from any book review. Certainly Flaubert did not from Sainte-Beuve's review of *Salammbo*."—See *N. Y. Times Book Review,* July 23, 1922, p. 28.

CRITICISM: PAST AND PRESENT

By ROBERT MORSS LOVETT

The history of criticism begins with the history of art. When the first artist drew his first horse in red chalk on the walls of his cave, the first critic was at his elbow. And as the other cave dwellers gathered to see and wonder, he doubtless diverted their attention from the artist and his work to himself by raising the pregnant question, "What is criticism, and what is its function at the present time?"

Four factors in criticism

I do not know how he answered that question, but I know that it must have been in one of four ways. There are involved in creative or representative art three factors: there is the artist or creator; there is the material or conception to which he gives form; and there is the public to which he addresses his product. Of course I recognize that in certain cases the first factor and the last are the same—the artist creates for himself alone. Now the resulting work of art will vary according to which of these three factors the artist emphasizes. If he is thinking chiefly of himself he will work in one way; if his loyalty is to his form or material, in quite a different way; and if his leading aim is to capture his public, in a third. So with the critic. He recognizes the three factors in production, and adds to them a fourth, namely himself: and he will answer his question as to the function of criticism according to which of the four he has most insistently in mind.

The historical and interpretative critic

It may be, though it is unlikely, that the first critic was inspired chiefly by devotion to the artist, whom we may call Ab. Standing by Ab's side in the dim cave he first tried to see what Ab had been about and then explain it to the multitude. He envisaged the function of criticism as that of understand-

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ing what the artist had attempted, and of appraising his performance in the light of this understanding. His task was that of interpretation of the masterpiece through the personality of the artist. After the death of Ab, the function of his interpretative critic would be still more important. To scoffers who denied that the object was a horse at all, he would explain that the artist grew up on the plains, where he thought, talked and ate horse, that he loved horsemanship and had remarkable success in picking winners, in short that given the artist's personality and environment—the man and the moment—he could have meant by his marks on the wall nothing but a horse. Thus the critic a few generations after the event became a productive scholar, like Professor Kittredge. Or to other denying spirits who declared that, horse though it might be, it was not the work of Ab but of a follower and pupil, the critic would defend his attribution by pointing out the peculiar trick which Ab had in pointing his horses' ears, and which his pupils forgot to copy. Thus the critic became a connoisseur and professional art critic like Signor Morelli or Mr. Berenson. The chief virtues of this type of criticism are honesty, intelligence, sympathy—and its highest function is interpretation. Its reductio ad absurdum occurs when the critic becomes the judge, and uses his knowledge of Ab's character unfairly against him, declaring, like Ruskin, "Ab was a bad man and therefore he couldn't draw a good horse."

The aesthetic and judicial critic

But let us suppose that the first critic had his mind focussed upon the result of Ab's striving, that he forgot the artist in the work of art. Then his problem was to appraise Ab's technique, to point out wherein and why it failed to do justice to the conception. If he insisted on comparing Ab's drawing to a real horse he was a naturalistic critic; if to the eternal and universal concept of horse he was an idealist. He was naturally a superior person and therefore unpleasant, and he gave an unpleasant connotation to the term criticism. When he looked at Ab it was as a pedagogue regards a pupil, training him to produce better results. When he considered the public it was as a lecturer, explaining why the work in question did or did not

appeal to the best minds. This line of reasoning might lead him into an examination of the principles of beauty and taste according to laws of psychology, when he would become a philosopher in aesthetics. But he also was under the constant temptation to assume judicial functions. He became the judge before whom Ab was brought to be tried on technical or aesthetic grounds, and who, like Francis Jeffrey, always remembered that the judge is condemned when the guilty are acquitted. But Ab might have had the satisfaction of knowing that to future generations of aesthetic judges he would become a law in himself. To them his first horse would be a standard of achievement, a classic, for the first rule of classical criticism is "To copy nature is to copy Ab."

The ethical critic

But let us make the further supposition that the first critic had his mind fixed chiefly on the spectators who crowded the cave to see Ab's masterpiece. What should he say to them? Tell them of Ab's early life, and his fondness for horses and horsey associations? Most unedifying. Point out how truly and sympathetically Ab had seen and reproduced the object of his affection? But what would that do for their business prosperity or their eternal salvation? No, an ethical lesson or judgment was to be extracted from Ab's masterpiece. And thus the critic became the preacher. He reminded his audience that "the horse is a vain thing for safety." He became a moralist, anxiously inquiring of the work of art "What will it do to the beholder? Will it leave him better or worse fitted for life here or hereafter?" He became the social philosopher, seeing in Ab's horse an attack on human standards of living; or the patriot finding in the patient docility of the beast a seditious reference to a virtue on the part of the enemy. He also became the judge. Finding that the public reacted perversely to his warnings he questioned whether it could be trusted to see the drawing at all; and if the temperamental Ab got himself enmeshed in a scandal the critic became the censor and barred Ab's work from the walls of the cave.

The impressionistic critic

Finally, the first critic may have been chiefly absorbed in himself, in his own sensations, impressions, reactions. He was perhaps used to finding "every moment some form or color growing perfect in hand or face, some tone on the hills choicer than the rest," and he may have found something on the walls of the cave which stirred his senses to the same excitement. He may have seen in Ab's crude drawing something that touched him more nearly than the object in life had done, something more real than actuality, and have felt in consequence a certain enhancement of his personality, a sense of more abundant life. He would try to express his emotion in language, to translate Ab's effort into another medium, and he would therefore become an artist himself, using Ab's work as a source of material as freely as he would have used nature. To the people who objected that he talked of an Ab unrecognized by them or even by Ab himself, he would defend his procedure. "What do I know of Ab? A few facts of his life, probably contradicted by others that I don't know, and which are at best misleading. What do I care about principles of beauty and laws of aesthetics? Who am I to say what is good for my fellow men? All I know are my own sensations. Ab's horse like other phenomena exists for me only in them, and only from them can I honestly bear witness to his art."

I do not mean to suggest that the four types of criticism which I have noted, historical, aesthetic, ethical and impressionistic, afford a complete classification; still less that they exist in classes separate and distinct each from the other. The same critic may partake of more than one type; as he may show more than one critical attitude. He may be by turns interpreter, judge, moralist, and artist. Nearly every critic, however, is predominantly of one type, and shows a tendency to persist in one attitude. Moreover, these different types of criticism predominate in different periods according to the intellectual character of the time. Thus in the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century criticism was largely aesthetic, divided into schools, classical and romantic, of which Dr. Johnson, Jeffrey, and Coleridge are the expositors. The

romantic critic tended toward impressionism, in William Hazlitt. In the middle nineteenth century the interest in humanity finds reflection in ethical criticism, in the shadow of which America remains. Matthew Arnold lamented in an early preface to his poems the lack of a critic as aesthetic schoolmaster for young poets; but when he propounded his famous query as to the function of criticism he answered it, in terms befitting a missionary, "to make known the best that is thought and known in the world," and the bulk of his critical performance rests on the foundation of his dictum that conduct is three-fourths of life. The scientific movement in thought, and the accompanying realistic movement in literature and art, naturally led to a criticism of interpretation, biographical, historical, scientific, scholarly. The famous environment theory of Taine is an illustration. At the close of the century, the period known as the decadence is characterized by impressionistic criticism and the emergence of the critic as an artist in his own right. This is the critical attitude of Lemaître, Pater and Wilde, and it is the one to which Mr. T. S. Eliot inclines in his account of The Perfect Critic.

In trying to answer the question What is Criticism? I am aware that with a pedantry which justifies Mr. Mencken's worst doubts of my profession I have drawn entirely upon the past. But it is only in the light of the past that I see any approach to an answer to the question which remains as to the function of criticism at the present time. That answer must depend in the present as in the past upon the intellectual character of the period with reference to the arts. Now it is a commonplace that a leading characteristic of the world today is the vast popularization of the arts of expression. To this democracy literature has succumbed; and painting and music, though defended by more exacting technique, are tending in the same direction. No longer do writers form a caste apart, an institution devoted to the production of masterpieces, seeking like Milton "to leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die." On the contrary in these days of popular education everyone writes or threatens to do so,

Intellectual character of our period

and measures success not in length of time, but in width of space, not by a fit audience though few extending in a thin line down the centuries, but by the unfit and vast assembly of readers scattered over the whole world who for a week or a month may be held by the charm of a "best seller." No longer does the literary audience consist of a group of connoisseurs, instructed by criticism to make formal comparisons and praise the best. On the contrary, everybody reads; and supplying reading-matter to an immense and voracious public has become a business like supplying it with clothes and food.

Duties of the contemporary critic

In these circumstances the function of criticism becomes one of immense importance. In the first place literature is exposed to two dangers, the practice of its art by the unlearned and the determination of its quality by the masses. It would seem that the first duty of chivalrous criticism is to defend the art of letters from malpractice, as in the past it defended poetry from bad poets. Should not criticism seek to play the schoolmaster, limiting the vast area of subject matter, preserving the principles of form, and raising anew the institution of literature on aesthetic principles which should decisively separate it from mere reading matter? Or rather is not the proper preoccupation of criticism with the author? Should the critic not give himself with all his zeal to the single task of interpretation? Is there not danger that genius will be lost in the mass of mediocrity, and its masterpieces be choked to death among the weeds of the jungle? Or finally is not the critic's chief concern with the public, lest it innoculate itself with the germs of its own obscure maladies? Is he not more than ever before called upon to act as judge, censor, executioner in the interest of public welfare? Undoubtedly a plausible case can be made out for any one of these three functions of criticism, or of all together, for as I have said they are not necessarily exclusive. But the assumption of any or all of them depends upon the critic's being Don Quixote. It happens indeed that he sometimes justifies a new relation of subject matter and form; or that, by a tour de force, he rescues a sinking artist, or even that before his condemning eloquence

the wayward public stands rebuked. These triumphs, however, are byproducts of his activity, not the main objects of his endeavor.

In the general sauve qui peut, I believe that the critic's chief occupation should be with himself. His first duty is to save his own soul. And this he will accomplish most surely by divesting himself of preconceptions and prejudices whether derived from the authority of history or of science, by preserving in the whirl of phenomena the self-consciousness and detachment of the artist. The mass of production about him is part of the material of the world, the stuff of life. Among the paradoxes of Oscar Wilde a sentence emerges which is profoundly true. "The critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticizes as the artist does to the visible world of form and color, or the unseen world of passion and thought." It is his primary function to bear a faithful record of his impressions. He is valuable for the sensitiveness of his nerves, for the fineness of his perceptions, for the validity of his thought, whether in the field of aesthetics, ethics or human sympathy. His service to the artist, to art, or to the people is comprehended in his conscience toward himself. He will stimulate the artist to more passionate creation by his appreciation and by his competition; he will serve art by enlarging its boundaries, not by circumscribing them; and he will aid the public not by imposing impressions of his own or theories of other men upon it, but by arousing it to reaction on its own account. For "The aim of criticism is to make every man his own critic."

THE AUTHORITY OF CRITICISM

By WILLIAM P. TRENT

I

The comparatively recent visit of M. Ferdinand Brunetière to this country has stimulated among us fresh interest in a question as old as the hills, and as varied in the forms it assumes; to wit, What is the weight of authority carried by criticism? Is there such a thing, men are asking themselves, as a science of criticism, or is all criticism at bottom merely the expression of an individual opinion, unsupported, or supported in varying degrees, by other individual opinions? If it is well-nigh impossible to eliminate the personal equation in strictly scientific experiments, is it worth while, they ask, to try to eliminate it from our studies in the semi-sciences, such as ethics and history, or in the arts? In other words, is not criticism a present, individual act; ought not the critic to say "I" instead of "we"; and is not every one of us that reads a book or looks at a picture as much master of his own likes and dislikes as the typical Englishman is lord of his own castle?

* * * *

Influence of teachers and reporters

But, over and above the labors of individual critics, there are two forces at work in all parts of the Western world that continue to carry on this conflict, often unconsciously. These two forces are the teachers and the reporters. Nearly all persons who engage in any form of teaching are interested in preserving the sway of authority, and may be counted on the side of conservative criticism. On the other hand, men whose business it is primarily to amuse and interest, and only secondarily to instruct, society, are not led to uphold the sway of authority (save in matters of religion and politics about which their

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patrons may be sensitive) simply because what holds by the past is not likely to prove so interesting as what touches the present or looks to the future.

Reporters, then,—and the term practically includes all writers who minister to public curiosity,—may be counted, in most cases, on the side of individualistic criticism. That is to say, the reportorial spirit may be counted; for newspaper critics *per se* are usually hide-bound sticklers for academic methods. As the reporter, owing to the waning force of traditional checks upon a mixed and rapidly evolving society, plays quite a part among us, and is likely to gain power rather than lose it in the near future, it follows that impressionist criticism will not lose ground in America for some time to come, even if it does not grow rampant. On the other hand, as our teachers and journalistic critics are rarely possessed of broad culture, the real force and value of the academic principles they stand for tend to become enfeebled and obscured. Hence, it is not so much a battle of the critics that we are likely to observe in America, as a *mêlée*.

If all this be true, it would seem to be worth our while to endeavor to determine when the truth dies with regard to this vexed problem of the authority of criticism. If M. Brunetière is right, and M. Lemaître wrong, it will be well to try to check our present propulsion toward impressionism. If M. Brunetière is wrong,—I use his name only because he is plainly the foremost living representative of academic criticism,—then we may feel easy about the go-as-you-please methods of some of our critics, and may give ourselves up to a quite hedonistic cult of frank individualism. If, however, both of these distinguished men are right in part, and both are wrong in part, it is obvious that it all the more behooves us to seek to establish the proper limits of the principles of criticism each strives to apply; for the more complex our principles of thought and action, the more chance there is of our going dangerously astray in their application. It is hardly necessary to add that a presumption lies in favor of the last hypothesis, not only because extremes are rarely safe, but because two great critics, or two numerous factions of critics,

are not likely to be enthusiastic supporters of opposing principles without having positive reasons of weight to actuate and sustain them in their contentions.

II

Shall we defer to authority?

Our first question is, then, whether M. Brunetière is right when he asks us to distrust our individual judgment about a piece of literature, and to make a study of criticism and literary history in order to discover the proper value and rank of the work to be judged, before we venture to form or express a settled opinion concerning it. This is practically what he does ask, although he lays most stress on a particular demand; to wit, that we shall pay special attention to the matter of genres—that is, to the different forms or categories of literature. It is also what Matthew Arnold asked, although he laid most stress on the matter of general culture. But M. Lemaitre demurs at once. He says, in substance: You are leaving out of sight the main object for which men write and read books, viz., to receive pleasure and, partly, to give it. Your abstract genres, your epics and dramas, creatures of your own brains, become your tyrants and doom you to hopeless drudgery. It is no longer possible for you to take up a book and simply enjoy it. I, too, could do your kind of criticism if I had a mind to; but if I did, I should be turned into a solemn magistrate, thinking forever of the black cap I must soon put on. Now this demurrer has plainly its basis in common sense, and is a wholesome corrective of the claims of the academic critic when these take an extreme form. It is obvious that certain minds will always rebel at a hard and fast code of rules for critical reading, and that most minds will rebel sometimes. Not only are there books that we want to read without analysis, but there are times when we prefer simply to read a book that at other times we should be glad to analyze. We do not care to analyze *The Prisoner of Zenda*: it would scarcely pay us to analyze it, although one enterprising student of architecture has drawn an elaborate plan of the remarkable castle. Yet we were all eager to read it; and we are most of us glad now that

we did read it. On the other hand, we ought at one time or another to make a careful analytic study of Shakespeare's Sonnets; yet there are some of us who like to have a pocket edition of these divine poems with us on a railway journey, when careful study is plainly out of the question.

Again, we are constantly repeating to young people the injunction that they should begin to read classical poems and novels as soon as they are able to comprehend them; but we do not say at the same time that they must wait until they understand the main facts about the "evolution of genres" before they form an opinion of the general value and interest to themselves of the literature with which they have been brought in contact. In this case, however, we do apply a part at least of M. Brunetière's critical philosophy; for we rely chiefly on the verdicts of past generations in our choice of the classics we recommend to the young. Still, it remains true that the most critically minded of us cannot be critical always, and that large classes of readers can never be critical in any true sense of the word. So M. Brunetière's principles hold good for only a small body of readers, and not at all times and seasons even for these. It is idle, however, to think that he has ever meant them to be taken strictly by the majority, by what we call politely the reading public; yet there is a sense in which they may be laid to heart by every one, and inculcated even in a very young child..

III

The principles of academic criticism

Reduced to their lowest terms, the principles for which most academic critics stand are, I think, three in number: (1) That due weight should be given to the collective wisdom of the past and the trained knowledge of the present; (2) that there are more or less ascertainable degrees of value in the various genres of artistic production; and (3) that no art can be absolutely divorced from ethics.

Art and ethics

It follows at once from the assumption of these three principles that if it can be shown that a special kind of poetry, say the epic, is of greater value (that is, makes a higher and wider appeal to the minds and hearts of

men in general) than another kind, say the elegy, it is not merely a mistake of judgment to prefer the latter to the former, but also, where sufficient knowledge is available,—a point which is covered by the first principle given above,—an ethical lapse of a more or less venial character. In fine, if there were such a person as a purely academic critic of perfect fearlessness, he would affirm that to prefer Gray's Elegy to Paradise Lost is not only foolish, but wrong; for this is the sense in which he accepts the dictum that art cannot be divorced from ethics; it being quite possible for an academic critic to acquiesce in the truth of the maxim "Art for art's sake," provided it be intepreted rationally. In other words the academic critic, while he may not judge works of art from a preconceived ethical point of view, and demand that they serve some definite ethical purpose, will, if he be consistent, assert emphatically that, as no judgment can be formed without entailing some corresponding responsibility, and as objects of art must be judged before we can determine whether the emotions produced by them are really wholesome or harmful, it follows that art, by entailing responsibilities upon all who are brought into contact with it,—and what experience in life does not entail upon us the responsibility of determining whether it be wholesome or harmful?—cannot in the last analysis be divorced from ethics.

If, now, it be urged that what we ought to examine and pass judgment upon is not the object of art that produces emotions in us, but ourselves who experience these emotions, the critic will reply that he has always maintained the necessity for self-examination in aesthetic matters, but that, if a doubt be implied with regard to the possibility of obtaining valid objective judgments in the domain of the arts, such doubt must apply as well to the ultimate validity of all other objective judgments, with the result that we are landed either in pure idealism or in universal scepticism. An objection, however, that is so far-reaching is pratically no objection at all.

But certainly this strange doctrine, that it is in some way wrong to prefer a poem, a picture, or a statue of an inferior genre to one of a superior genre, will not be admitted by many persons without considerable protest. Yet, if it be once granted that there are higher and lower forms of art, and that it is the duty of every man, not merely to act on the highest level possible, but also to expose his soul to the highest influences possible, it follows that to prefer wilfully the lower to the higher in any particular is, strictly speaking, an ethical lapse. Many of us are, of course, absolved from all blame in this regard on account of our ignorance in the premises: those of us who are not ignorant have generally tried to justify ourselves by affirming that, while there may be genres, there is no proof that one is higher than another; that it is a mere assumption of *a priori* criticism to say, for example, that a fine ode like Gray's Progress of Poesy is *per se* superior to the same poet's Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,—an opinion held, perhaps, both by Gray himself and by Matthew Arnold.

The rating of the genres

The answer made by the academic critic to this contention will naturally bring into question his first principle, viz., that due weight should be given to the collective wisdom of the past and to the trained knowledge of the present. The ode, he will say, stands at the head of all forms of lyrical poetry, because in it the subjective emotions of the poet are fused to a white heat. The ancients regarded the ode as the greatest of lyrical forms; and modern students of poetry have as yet seen no reason to abandon this view. The finest ode of Pindar ought then to be superior to any elegy of Mimnermus, and Gray's ode should outrank his Elegy, unless in the former poem the poet has fallen below the level proper to the genre selected, and in the latter poem has risen to an equal or greater degree,—a phenomenon which seems to have occurred, if the two pieces be regarded as wholes, and which both explains and justifies the popular verdict in the matter.

This answer shows us at once how interdependent the three principles of the academic critic really are. If there are genres of higher and lower value, then it is our duty to try to put ourselves in greater sympathy with the higher than with the lower; or, in other words, we cannot, if we would, divorce art from ethics. But we cannot establish our contention that there are superior and inferior genres, unless we insist that due weight be given to that collective wisdom of the past which has established and differentiated the various genres. It is the conscious, or unconscious, perception of the interdependence of these principles of academic criticism that has led the impressionists, who generally desire to escape from ethical responsibility, to attack with relentless vigor that deference to the judgment of the past inculcated by the first principle. They cannot well attack the second part of this principle, that due weight should be given to the trained knowledge of the present; for this would be to undermine the authority of their own privileged order of *mandarins*: they can, however, say much about a servile dependence on an effete past.

Interdependence of the academic principles

But, if the collective wisdom of the ages be of paramount importance in ethics, philosophy, law, and all studies in which fresh material for experimentation is not being continually introduced, it is difficult to see how its authority, within reasonable limits, can be questioned with regard to criticism. That genres exist even in art is a fact as well determined as the existence of the various mental faculties. That we do not know the ultimate nature of art in the one case, or of mind in the other, does not prove that we have no need of the hypotheses of criticism and of metaphysics. That there is a hierarchy of genres is a fact as well proved as that there is a hierarchy of mental powers or of bodily functions.[1] To cut the *Æneid* out of Latin literature

A hierarchy of genres

[1]With regard to this important matter of the hierarchy of the genres one cannot do better than to follow Brunetière in quoting Taine: "Dans le monde imaginaire, comme dans le monde réel, il y a des rangs divers parce qu'il y a des valeurs diverses. Le public et les connaisseurs assignent les uns et estiment les autres. Nous n'avons pas fait autre chose depuis cinq ans, en parcourant les écoles de l'Italie, des Pays-Bas, et de la Grèce. Nous avons toujours, et à chaque pas, porté des jugements. Sans le

would be like putting out a man's eye: to cut out Juvenal's *Satires* would be like amputating a finger. *"Solvitur inquirendo."* Ask even the most rampant impressionist—except, perhaps, the ultra-Whitmanite—which he would rather have written, Shakespeare's dramas or Burns's songs, Scott's romances or Maupassant's tales, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* or Macaulay's *Essays,* and the answer will nearly always indicate a tacit acceptance of the theory of a hierarchy of genres. "A mere instance of the force of convention," the Whitmanite might say, "Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* put all the genres to the blush, and the academic critics, too. You will not dare to mention Shakespeare and Milton in the same breath with him!" An advocate of free love might make just such a reply to an argument in favor of monogamy.

In fact it can be easily shown that the distinctions and gradations sanctioned by the great critics of the past, and upheld by the arguments of the academic critics of the present, are founded on just the same basis as the distinctions and gradations established and supported by the jurist and the scientific moralist. The critic may often deal with matters of less transcendent importance than his fellow-students: but his science, in the last analysis, is as securely based as theirs; for all three ultimately rest on authority and present judgment. He has no such sanctions to rely upon as the jurist and the moralist have; hence he is often doomed to see uninformed opinions prevail: his domain is one that can be easily entered from all sides; hence he is compelled to struggle with numerous rivals who are continually betraying the cause of the science he serves. But he feels that his position is at bottom as secure as that of any student of any semi-science can be; and he bides his time in the hope of better days.

savoir nous avions en main un instrument de mesure. Les autres hommes sont comme nous, et en critique comme ailleurs il y a des vérités acquises. Chacun reconnaît aujourd 'hui que certains poètes, comme Dante et Shakespere, certains compositeurs, comme Mozart et Beethoven, tiennent la première place dans leur art. On l'accorde à Goethe, parmi les écrivains de notre siècle; parmi les Hollandais, à Rembrandt; parmi les Vénitiens, à Titien. Trois artistes de la Renaissance italienne, Léonard de Vinci, Michel-Ange, et Raphaël, montent d'un consentement unanime au-dessus de tous les autres." (*L'Evolution des Genres,* I, De la Critique, p. 273.)

IV

We have now seen what, in brief, are the contentions of the academic critic; and we must admit that if his claim, that criticism rests for its authority on the same basis as ethics and law, be established, it is expedient for us, if not incumbent upon us, to give criticism its due influence in the formation of our literary and artistic tastes and judgments. Could we once bring ourselves to do this, we should find that the parallel between criticism and its sister semi-sciences holds very closely. Just as there are some ethical principles acted upon by all civilized men, others acted upon chiefly by certain races, others only by individuals of a high type of character, so there are principles of criticism universal, racial, and individual in their application. For example, all men have practically agreed—at least till the present generation—to regard poetry as superior, on the whole, to prose; the French have practically agreed that the drama which preserves the unities is the best for their stage; most highly cultured individuals are agreed in giving a greater value to the sonnet as a poetic form than would be accorded it by the average reader. In the light of these facts we must infer that there are some principles of criticism so binding upon us that we ought to endeavor not only to make an individual application of them, but also to inculcate them in our children; others which, as Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, or what not, it will probably be to our advantage to follow; still others which, in all likelihood, will appeal to us more and more as we advance in culture. In short, no man who is seeking to develop his literary and artistic taste and judgment can afford to be a thoroughgoing impressionist any more than he can afford to be an absolute individualist in his daily life and conduct.

Basic principles of criticism

If there be any force in the above reasoning, it is plain that something at least of M. Brunetière's teaching may be taken to heart by us all. The duty of fitting ourselves not merely to enjoy the great poetry of the world, but to prefer it to all other forms of aesthetic en-

Consequent obligations

joyment, may be insisted upon with advantage. All men will not attain to such enjoyment or such preference; but this is no reason why all men should not be admonished to make the effort to attain. No man follows perfectly the law of Christ; yet no preacher ceases to uphold that law as an ideal pattern of conduct. It is clear, then, that no man or child should be allowed to say complacently, as one so often hears it said, "I don't care for poetry." Perhaps they cannot be made to care for it; but their complacency may at least be shaken.

Again, it is just as certain that there are higher and lower genres of poetry as that poetry is superior, on the whole, to prose. Hence it is our duty to fit ourselves to prefer the higher genres to the lower. This, again, we shall not all attain to. Some people are so constituted that elegiac musings and speculations, such as those that make up the *In Memoriam,* will always attract them more than the stately march of the *Paradise Lost,* or the subtle beauty and keen interest of the *Divine Comedy.* On the other hand, one can find persons who do not care at all for such admirable elegiac verse as Lamartine's "Le Lac." In either case, we may be unable to correct the bias; but we need not fail to point out that it is an unfortunate one, if any reliance may and should be placed upon the collective wisdom of the past and the trained judgment of the present.

But our teaching need not stop here. There will always be persons who will care more for the subject-matter of a book than for the style in which it is written; yet we should none the less insist that it is the duty of every man to fit himself to tell a good style from a bad, to enjoy an excellent style, and to eschew, whenever it is possible, the books that are clumsily written. An insistence upon this matter of taste in style has, after many generations, placed French literature in its present position of supremacy: a failure to insist upon it has left German literature where it is today. If we Americans and Englishmen will only cultivate our taste for style, and will remember, too, that principle upon which Matthew Arnold was forever harping, that great literature needs a sound subject-matter, we shall all be saved from many bizarre judgments and

opinions. We shall not then be able to rank Whitman, true and great poet though he often was, among the *dii majores* of song, nor to imagine that Tennyson or Wordsworth or Shelley can rightly be mentioned in the same breath with Milton.

Yet, although we shall do well to respect the academic critic when he bids us distrust our own judgments and consult the authoritative opinions of the best critics past and present, it does not follow that we must all endeavor to inform ourselves about the evolution of genres, the details of literary history, or any of the numerous matters that assume great importance in the eyes of the professional critic. Few of us have the time for such minute study: fewer still have any inclination for it. One can love and get pleasure from flowers without knowing much about botany; similarly, one can love and get pleasure from literature without being a trained critic. The botanist and the critic to be sure, ought, unless they become dry-as-dusts, to have decided advantages over the mere lovers of flowers and of books; but the latter are in no bad way if their minds and souls have been enlightened in a broad and general manner. This broad and general enlightenment will begin to dawn upon us the moment we are brought in contact with great literature and art; provided always that our tendency to excessive individualism is checked by proper training. Such being the case, we are in duty bound to range ourselves by the side of those academic critics who offer to furnish this training which, as we have just seen, is by no means technical in character.

V

Rôle of the impressionistic critic

Granting, however, that criticism has a certain authority over us with regard to the submission of our individual judgments relative to such matters as the supremacy of poetry to prose, of one genre to another, of form to formlessness, it would seem to be true also that, as we are constituted with varying tastes and aptitudes, and brought up in varying environments, we are more or less forced to form subjective opinions and thus to become impressionist critics, at least for the time being.

If all criticism is, in its essence, subjective, and attains objectivity only through its subsequent acceptance by minds other than the critic's own, which in turn is a subjective procedure, it is certain that our own judgment or opinion with regard to any object of art will be of more vital importance to us than any conventional judgment or opinion can possibly be. In other words, the impressionist critic would seem to have a *rôle* as important and a province as extended as the academic critic has.

There can scarcely be two opinions with regard to this matter. The fact that there are impressionist critics who are widely read and enjoyed seems of itself to prove their usefulness. It is not possible to deny that, by concentrating themselves upon some favorite author, artist, book, or painting, impressionist critics have added to the world's knowledge, and, what is more, to its enjoyment; that they have actually forged weapons for their foes, the academic critics, to use against them. Who, for example, has done more to make contemporary France return to a proper admiration of Lamartine than that prince of impressionists, M. Lemaitre? Certainly not M. Brunetière. But impressionists are justified in existing not only by the good they do, but also by the fact that there is an abundant range of work for them to accomplish. There are regions in the domain of literature and art over which the academic critic has little or no control. No one should affirm, for example, that it is the duty of the academic critic to set us rules for the enjoyment or even full comprehension of that department of poetry known as "society verse." He can tell us, indeed, that it should not be ranked high in the scale of the genres; but, if he be wise, he will scarcely undertake to tell us how much we ought to care for it, or when it will most appeal to us.

The reason for this proper reticence on his part is very simple. Society verse does not necessarily appeal to the natural man; and the academic critic, in most of his reasoning, finds it necessary to give his principles of criticism the broadest basis possible. He tells us that it is human to admire the sublime and to weep at the pathetic; but he cannot tell us with

any truth that it is human to smile at the cleverness of a smart social set. The academic critic feels at home, therefore, in praising the *Paradise Lost* and the *Antigone*: he will do well to leave to the impressionist—to the man to the manner born, like the late Mr. Locker-Lampson (who indeed could theorize also on the subject in an admirable way)—the task of initiating us into the charming mysteries of society verse. The moment, however, that the impressionist goes too far in his advocacy of his favorite poet or kind of poetry, the academic critic, with his broader knowledge and wider range of thought, is ready to check him. Pope, for instance, is, in many respects, a poet of society whom it would be easy for a certain kind of impressionist to overrate, and for another kind, preferring, let us say, the poetry of nature, to underrate, even to the point of proclaiming that the brilliant satirist was no poet at all. Both these extremes of judgment would surely be corrected by a competent academic critic.

But not only can the impressionist critic serve us as the best possible guide in certain well-defined regions of literature and art; he is also the person to help us in the exploration of new regions. There are genres like the novel, the possibilities of which we are probably far from knowing thoroughly. With respect to present work in these genres, it may be questioned whether the training and methods of the academic critic fit him for doing effective service: he is at his best in dealing with genres of which the capabilities have been long tested. The impressionist, on the other hand, unfettered by rules and traditions, is likely to be sympathetic with the fresh tentatives which creative genius is continually making in what we may call the "unclosed genres." He is the best critic for the new writers and, hence, for the majority of contemporary readers, who naturally form the clientage of the men who are making current literature. Then, again, it is the impressionist critic who is best qualified to apply to the literature of the past those fresh and novel points of view which each advancing generation supplies,—a most important work when it is not undertaken in a captious and self-seeking spirit.

Now surely, if all that has been said be true, the rôle of the impressionist is by no means a contemptible one. Not only has he certain departments of art and literature practically under his control, but he can do his share in criticising the men and works of the past, and he has the lion's share of the critical labors of the present. He has no reason to call the academic critic by harsh names; yet he frequently does—seemingly because, being bound by few rules, he forgets that he is bound by any, even by those of courtesy. He generally takes up a favorite and becomes a partisan, after which he fancies that, in order to elevate his hero, he must labor not merely to subordinate, but to cast down other great men. He will praise Tintoretto while belittling Titian; he will laud Shelley while decrying Byron; and he pities the benighted soul that in the bonds and fetters of custom still grovels before the "crumbling idol." This is but to say that, although the rôle of the impressionist is a great one, he is often false to it. Narrow and bigoted critics of an academic kind there have been in abundance; and they have done much harm, but scarcely enough to equal that done by the wild impressionists who are forever running amuck through the storied realms of art and literature.

VI

We are not so much concerned, however, with the failings of our two varieties of critics as we are with the very practical question, how we may get safely steered through the wide sea of literature when so many helmsmen are offering their services; and this question we may perhaps answer in part by summing up the points we have been making.

Services of the academics

We have seen already that, in certain matters, we shall do well to rely on the academic critics. We have seen that there are some universal principles of criticism that we should all learn to apply so far as we are able, such as the superiority of poetry to prose, of one genre to another, of form to formlessness. A moment's consideration will show us, furthermore, that corollaries from these principles are easily to be drawn and equally to be observed. Thus, for example, every schoolboy, not merely Macaulay's,

should know that Virgil, Dante, and Milton, as great epic poets, are superior respectively to Horace, Petrarch, and Shelley, as great lyric poets and should be ranked accordingly, and that if he does not like the greater poet so much as he does the inferior, it is either his own fault or his own misfortune, which, unless special reasons to the contrary exist, he should seek to remedy as best he may.

Within the same category of poetry, however, no such definite assignment of rank is, as a rule, possible, save when, as in the cases of Homer and Shakespeare, a universal consensus of opinion obtains the force of law. It is idle, for instance, to assert dogmatically that Dante is a greater poet than Milton, or vice versa. Yet nowhere in criticism is there more tendency to dogmatic utterance than in this very delicate matter of balancing the respective claims of two poets of the same type, whose rank is nearly even; and we cannot too often remind ourselves that dogma, although necessary perhaps at times, is never attractive or satisfactory to the inquiring and aspiring mind. It is open to us to urge everything we can in support of our favorite's claims,—the wider acceptance of Dante and his greater hold upon human sympathies, or Milton's treatment of the sublime, and his marvellous metrical mastery,—but, when all is said, when we have ranged the critics and summed up the arguments pro and con, we must frankly admit that there is still room for differences of opinion in this case and in all similar cases.

On the other hand, we cannot too firmly crush out such foolish recalcitrancy against established opinion as was once exhibited by a college student who, when asked whether he thought Bacon could have written Shakespeare's plays, replied indignantly, being more in love with philosophy than with poetry:—"Not much! He wouldn't have wasted his time on such wretched stuff!" That young man was not joking, on the principle that a foolish question required a foolish answer: he was merely furnishing an unconscious example of the folly of untrained impressionist criticism.

Other principles of universal, national, and class or individual application might be named that are equally binding

upon us and that measure the extent of our reliance upon the academic critic. On the other hand, we have already seen that we should rely on the impressionist for criticism relative to "unclosed genres" like the novel and "non-universal genres" like society verse, to contemporary writers and artists, and to the work of the past in the genres when it is necessary to reexamine it from fresh and legitimate points of view. If we will only bear these principles in mind, we shall scarcely go greatly astray in choosing our critics, or in determining how far to follow them.

Services of impressionists

But if the critics, on their part, continue to assert, as so many of them do, that the average reader has no rights and that art and literature can be truly appreciated only by the elect, the *mandarins,* the public will most assuredly continue to commit its own peculiar absurdities, to consider *Tom Jones* an immoral book and *Ben Hur* a great one; to read a thousand copies of *Trilby* to ten of the *Peau de Chagrin;* and to rejoice in the flat namby-pambyism of a "native author named Blank" or of a foreign author named Double Blank. And who shall blame them for their eccentricities, when the authority of criticism is so slightly esteemed by nine-tenths of the writers who call themselves critics?

THE NEW CRITICISM

By J. E. SPINGARN

Critics and poets

"What droll creatures these college professors are whenever they talk about art," wrote Flaubert in one of his letters, and voiced the world's opinion of academic criticism. For the world shares the view of the Italian poet that "monks and professors cannot write the lives of poets," and looks only to those rich in literary experience for its opinions on literature. But the poets themselves have had no special grudge against academic criticism that they have not felt equally for every other kind. For the most part, they have objected to all criticism, since what each mainly seeks in his own case is not criticism, but uncritical praise. "Kill the dog, he is a reviewer," cried the young Goethe; and in an age nearer our own William Morris expressed his contempt for those who earn a livelihood by writing their opinions of the works of others. Fortunately for Criticism, it does not live by the grace of poets, to whom it can be of small service at its best, but by the grace of others who have neither the poet's genius nor the critic's insight. I hope to persuade you this evening that the poets have been mistaken in their very conception of the critic's craft, which lives by a power that poets and critics share together. The secret of this power has come to men slowly, and the knowledge they have gained by it has transformed their idea of Criticism. What this secret is, and into what new paths Criticism is being led by it, is the subject of my lecture to-night.

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I

Impressionistic criticism

At the end of the last century, France once more occupied the center of that stage whose auditors are the inheritors of European civilization. Once more all the world listened while she talked and played, and some of the most brilliant of her talk was now on the question of the authority of Criticism. It is not my purpose to tell you (what you know already) with what sober and vigorous learning the official critics of the *Revue des deux Mondes* espoused the cause of old gods with the new weapons of science, and with what charm and tact, with what grace and suppleness of thought, Jules Lemaître and Anatole France, to mention no others, defended the free play of the appreciative mind. Some of the sparks that were beaten out on the anvil of controversy have become fixed stars, the classical utterances of Criticism, as when Anatole France described the critic not as a judge imposing sentence, but as a sensitive soul detailing his "adventures among masterpieces."

To have sensations in the presence of a work of art and to express them, that is the function of Criticism for the impressionistic critic. His attitude he would express somewhat in this fashion: "Here is a beautiful poem, let us say Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. To read it is for me to experience a thrill of pleasure. My delight in it is itself a judgment, and what better judgment is it possible for me to give? All that I can do is to tell how it affects me, what sensations it gives me. Other men will derive other sensations from it, and express them differently; they too have the same right as I. Each of us, if we are sensitive to impressions and express ourselves well, will produce a new work of art to replace the work which gave us our sensations. That is the art of Criticism, and beyond that Criticism cannot go."

We shall not begrudge this exquisite soul the pleasure of his sensations or his cult of them, nor would he be disconcerted if we were to point out that the interest has been shifted from the work of art to his own impressions. Let us suppose that you say to him: "We are not interested in you, but in

Prometheus Unbound. To describe the state of your health is not to help us to understand or to enjoy the poem. Your criticism constantly tends to get away from the work of art, and to center attention on yourself and your feelings."

But his answer would not be difficult to find: "What you say is true enough. My criticism tends to get farther and farther from the work of art and to cast a light upon myself; but all criticism tends to get away from the work of art and to substitute something in its place. The impressionist substitutes himself, but what other form of criticism gets closer to *Prometheus Unbound?* Historical criticism takes us away from it in a search of the environment, the age, the race, the poetic school of the artist; it tells us to read the history of the French Revolution, Godwin's *Political Justice,* the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus, and Calderón's *Mágico Prodigioso.* Psychological criticism takes me away from the poem, and sets me to work on the biography of the poet; I wish to enjoy *Prometheus Unbound,* and instead I am asked to become acquainted with Shelley the man. Dogmatic criticism does not get any closer to the work of art by testing it according to rules and standards; it sends me to the Greek dramatists, to Shakespeare, to Aristotle's *Poetics,* possibly to Darwin's *Origin of Species,* in order that I may see how far Shelley has failed to give dramatic reality to his poem, or has failed to observe the rules of his *genre;* but that means the study of other works, and not of *Prometheus Unbound.* Æsthetics takes me still farther afield into speculations on art and beauty. And so it is with every form of Criticism. Do not deceive yourself. All criticism tends to shift the interest from the work of art to something else. The other critics give us history, politics, biography, erudition, metaphysics. As for me, I re-dream the poet's dream, and if I seem to write lightly, it is because I have awakened, and smile to think I have mistaken a dream for reality. I at least strive to replace one work of art by another, and art can only find its *alter ego* in art."

Dogmatic or objective criticism

It would be idle to detail the arguments with which the advocates of the opposing forms of Criticism answered these questionings. Literary erudition and evolutionary science were the chief weapons used to fight this modern heresy, but the one is an unwieldy and the other a useless weapon in the field of æsthetic thought. On some sides, at least, the position of the impressionists was impregnable; but two points of attack were open to their opponents. They could combat the notion that taste is a substitute for learning, or learning a substitute for taste, since both are vital for Criticism; and they could maintain that the relativity of taste does not in any sense affect its authority. In this sense impressionistic Criticism erred only less grievously than the "judicial" Criticism which opposed it.

But these arguments are not my present concern; what I wish to point out is that the objective and dogmatic forms of Criticism were fighting no new battle against impressionistic Criticism in that decade of controversy. It was a battle as old as the earliest reflection on the subject of poetry, if not as old as the sensitiveness of poets. Modern literature begins with the same doubts, with the same quarrel. In the sixteenth century the Italians were formulating that classical code which imposed itself on Europe for two centuries, and which, even in our generation, Brunetière has merely disguised under the trappings of natural science. They evolved the dramatic unities, and all those rules which the poet Pope imagined to be "Nature still but Nature methodized." But at the very moment when their spokesman Scaliger was saying that "Aristotle is our emperor, the perpetual dictator of all the fine arts," another Italian, Pietro Aretino, was insisting that there is no rule except the whim of genius and no standard of judgment beyond individual taste.

The Italians passed on the torch to the French in the seventeenth century, and from that day to this the struggle between the two schools has never ceased to agitate the progress of Criticism in France. Boileau against Saint Evremond, Classicists against Romanticists, dogmatists against impres-

sionists,—the antinomy is deep in the French nature, indeed in the nature of Criticism itself. Listen to this: "It is not for the purpose of deciding on the merit of this noble poet [Virgil], nor of harming his reputation, that I have spoken so freely concerning him. The world will continue to think what it does of his beautiful verses; and as for me, I judge nothing, I only say what I think, and what effect each of these things produces on my heart and mind." Surely these words are from the lips of Lemaître himself! "I judge nothing; I only say what I feel." But no, these are the utterances of the Chevalier de Méré, a wit of the age of Louis XIV, and he is writing to the secretary of that stronghold of authority, the French Academy. For some men, even in the age of Boileau, criticism was nothing but an "adventure among masterpieces."

No, it is no new battle; it is the perpetual conflict of Criticism. In every age impressionism (or enjoyment) and dogmatism (or judgment) have grappled with one another. They are the two sexes of Criticism; and to say that they flourish in every age is to say that every age has its masculine as well as its feminine criticism,—the masculine criticism that may or may not force its own standards on literature, but that never at all events is dominated by the object of its studies; and the feminine criticism that responds to the lure of art with a kind ef passive ecstasy. In the age of Boileau it was the masculine type which gave the tone to Criticism; in our own, outside of the universities, it has certainly been the feminine. But they continue to exist side by side, ever falling short of their highest powers, unless mystically mated,—judgment erecting its edicts into arbitrary standards and conventions, enjoyment lost in the mazes of its sensuous indecision.

A common ground for critics

Yet if we examine these opposing forms of Criticism in our own age, we shall find, I think, that they are not wholly without a common ground to meet on; that, in fact, they are united in at least one prepossession which they do not share with the varying forms of Criticism in any of the earlier

periods of its history. The Greeks conceived of literature, not as an inevitable expression of creative power, but as a reasoned "imitation" or re-shaping of the materials of life; for Aristotle, poetry is the result of man's imitative instinct, and differs from history and science in that it deals with the probable or possible rather than with the real. The Romans conceived of literature as a noble art, intended (though under the guise of pleasure) to inspire men with high ideals of life. The classicists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries accepted this view in the main; for them, literature was a kind of exercise,—a craft acquired by study of the classics, and guided in the interpretation of nature by the traditions of Greek and Roman art. For these men literature was as much a product of reason as science or history. The eighteenth century complicated the course of Criticism by the introduction of vague and novel criteria, such as "imagination," "sentiment," and "taste," yet it was only in part able to liberate itself from the older tradition.

Expression the law of art

But with the Romantic Movement there developed the new idea which coördinates all Criticism in the nineteenth century. Very early in the century, Mme. de Staël and others formulated the idea that literature is an "expression of society." Victor Cousin founded the school of art for art's sake, enunciating "the fundamental rule, that expression is the supreme law of art." Later, Sainte-Beuve developed and illustrated his theory that literature is an expression of personality. Still later, under the influence of natural science. Taine took a hint from Hegel and elaborated the idea that literature is an expression of race, age, and environment. The extreme impressionists prefer to thing of art as the exquisite expression of delicate and fluctuating sensations or impressions of life. But for all these critics and theorists, literature is an expression of the external or internal, of the man himself or something outside the man; yet it is always conceived of as an art of expression.

The objective, the dogmatic, the impressionistic critics of our day may set for themselves very different tasks, but the idea of expression is implicit in all they write. They have,

as it were, this bond of blood: they are not merely man and woman, but brother and sister; and their father, or grandfather, was Sainte-Beuve. The bitter but acute analysis of his talent which Nietzsche has given us in the *Twilight of the Idols* brings out very clearly this dual side of his seminal power, the feminine sensitiveness and the masculine detachment. For Nietzsche, he is "nothing of a man; he wanders about, delicate, curious, tired, pumping people, a female after all, with a woman's revengefulness and a woman's sensuousness, a critic without a standard, without firmness, and without backbone." Here it is the impressionist in Sainte-Beuve that arouses the German's wrath. But in the same breath we find Nietzsche blaming him for "holding up objectivity as a mask;" and it is on this objective side that Sainte-Beuve becomes the source of all those historical and psychological forms of critical study which have influenced the academic thought of our day, leading insensibly, but inevitably, from empirical investigation to empirical law. The pedigree of the two schools thereafter is not difficult to trace: on the one side, from Sainte-Beuve through *l'art pour l'art* to impressionism, and on the other, from Sainte-Beuve through Taine to Brunetière and his egregious kin.

French criticism has been leaning heavily on the idea of expression for a century or more, but no attempt has been made in France to understand its æsthetic content, except for a few vague echoes of German thought. For the first to give philosophic precision to the theory of expression, and to found a method of Criticism based upon it, were the Germans of the age that stretches from Herder to Hegel. All the forces of philosophical thought were focused on this central concept, while the critics enriched themselves from out this golden store. I suppose you all remember the famous passage in which Carlyle describes the achievement of German criticism in that age. "Criticsm," says Carlyle, "has assumed a new form in Germany. It proceeds on other principles and proposes to itself a higher aim. The main question is not now a question concerning the qualities of diction, the coherence of metaphors, the fitness of sentiments, the general logical truth

in a work of art, as it was some half century ago among most critics, neither is it a question mainly of a psychological sort to be answered by discovering and delineating the peculiar nature of the poet from his poetry, as is usual with the best of our own critics at present; but it is, not indeed exclusively, but inclusively, of its two other questions, properly and ultimately a question of the essence and peculiar life of the poetry itself. . . . The problem is not now to determine by what mechanism Addison composed sentences and struck out similitudes, but by what far finer and more mysterious mechanism Shakespeare organized his dramas and gave life and individuality to his Ariel and his Hamlet. Wherein lies that life; how have they attained that shape and individuality? Whence comes that empyrean fire which irradiates their whole being, and pierces, at least in starry gleams, like a diviner thing, into all hearts? Are these dramas of his not veri-similar only, but true; nay, truer than reality itself, since the essence of unmixed reality is bodied forth in them under more expressive similes? What is this unity of pleasures; and can our deeper inspection discern it to be indivisible and existing by necessity because each work springs as it were from the general elements of thought and grows up therefrom into form and expansion by its own growth? Not only who was the poet and how did he compose, but what and how was the poem, and why was it a poem and not rhymed eloquence, creation and not figured passion? These are the questions for the critic. Criticism stands like an interpreter between the inspired and the uninspired; between the prophet and those who hear the melody of his words, and catch some glimpse of their material meaning, but understand not their deeper import."

I am afraid that no German critic wholly realized this ideal; but it was at least the achievement of the Germans that they enunciated the doctrine, even if they did not always adequately illustrate it in practice. It was they who first realized that art has performed its function when it has expressed itself; it was they who first conceived of Criticism as the study of expression. "There is a destructive and a creative or constructive criticism," said Goethe; the first measures and tests

literature according to mechanical standards, the second answers the fundamental questions: "What has the writer proposed to himself to do? and how far has he succeeded in carrying out his own plan?" Carlyle, in his essay on Goethe, almost uses Goethe's own words, when he says that the critic's first and foremost duty is to make plain to himself "what the poet's aim really and truly was, how the task he had to do stood before his eye, and how far, with such materials as were afforded him, he has fulfilled it."

The central problem of modern criticism

This has been the central problem, the guiding star, of all modern criticism. From Coleridge to Pater, from Sainte-Beuve to Lemaitre, this is what critics have been striving for, even when they have not succeeded; yes, even when they have been deceiving themselves into thinking that they were striving for something else. This was not the ideal of the critics of Aristotle's day, who, like so many of their successors, censured a work of art as "irrational, impossible, morally hurtful, self-contradictory, or contrary to technical correctness." This was not Boileau's standard when he blamed Tasso for the introduction of Christian rather than pagan mythology into epic poetry; nor Addison's, when he tested *Paradise Lost* according to the rules of Le Bossu; nor Dr. Johnson's, when he lamented the absence of poetic justice in *King Lear*, or pronounced dogmatically that the poet should not "number the streaks of the tulip." What has the poet tried to do, and how has he fulfilled his intention? What is he striving to express and how has he expressed it? What impression does his work make on me, and how can I best express this impression? These are the questions that modern critics have been taught to ask when face to face with the work of a poet. Only one *caveat* must be borne in mind when attempting to answer them: the poet's intentions must be judged at the moment of the creative act, as mirrored in the work of art itself, and not by the vague ambitions which he imagines to be his real intentions before or after the creative act is achieved.

II

The theory of expression, the concept of literature as an art of expression, is the common ground on which critics have met for a century or more. Yet how many absurdities, how many complicated systems, how many confusions have been superimposed on this fundamental idea; and how slowly has its full significance become the possession of critics! To accept the naked principle is to play havoc with these confusions and complications; and no one has seen this more clearly, or driven home its inevitable consequences with more intelligence and vigor, than an Italian thinker and critic of our own day, Benedetto Croce, who has been gaining ground in the English-speaking world from the day when Mr. Balfour, seven or eight years ago, gave him a kind of official introduction in his Romanes Lecture. But I for one needed no introduction to his work; under his banner I enrolled myself long ago, and here re-enroll myself in what I now say. He has led æsthetic thought inevitably from the concept that art is expression to the conclusion that all expression is art. Time does not permit, nor reason ask, that we should follow this argument through all its *pros* and *cons*. If this theory of expression be once and for all accepted, as indeed it has been partly though confusedly accepted by all modern critics, the ground of Criticism is cleared of its dead lumber and its weeds. I propose now merely to point out this dead lumber and these weeds. In other words, we shall see to what conclusions the critical thought and practice of a century have been inevitably converging, and what elements of the old Criticism and the old literary history are disappearing from the new.

Benedetto Croce

In the first place, we have done with all the old Rules. The very conception of "rules" harks back to an age of magic, and reminds the modern of those mysterious words which the heroes of the fairy-tales are without reason forbidden to utter; the rules are a survival of the savage *taboo*. We find few arbitrary rules in Aristotle, who limited himself to empirical inductions from the experience of literature; but they appear in the later Greek rhetori-

Rules

cians; and in the Romans, empirical induction has been hardened into dogma. Horace lays down the law to the prospective playwright in this manner: "You must never have more than three actors on the stage at any one time; you must never let your drama exceed five acts." It is unnecessary to trace the history of these rules, or to indicate how they increased in number, how they were arranged into a system by the classicists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how they burdened the creative art of that period. They were never without their enemies. We have seen how Aretino was pitted against Scaliger, Saint-Evremond against Boileau; and in every age the poets have astounded the critics by transgressing rules without the sacrifice of beauty; but it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the Romanticists banished them from the province of Criticism. The pedantry of our own day has borrowed "conventions" from history and "technique" from science as substitutes for the outworn formulæ of the past; but these are merely new names for the old mechanical rules; and they too will go, when Criticism clearly recognizes in every work of art a spiritual creation governed by its own law.

Genres

We have done with the *genres,* or literary kinds. Their history is inseparably bound up with that of the classical rules. Certain works of literature have a general resemblance and are loosely classed together (for the sake of convenience) as lyric, comedy, tragedy, epic, pastoral, and the like; the classicists made of each of these divisions a fixed norm governed by inviolable laws. The separation of the *genres* was a consequence of this law of classicism: comedy should not be mingled with tragedy, nor epic with lyric. But no sooner was the law enunciated than it was broken by an artist impatient or ignorant of its restraints, and the critics have been obliged to explain away these violations of their laws, or gradually to change the laws themselves. But if art is organic expression, and every work of art is to be interrogated with the question, "What has it expressed, and how completely?" there is no place for the question whether it has conformed to some convenient classi-

fication of critics or to some law derived from this classification. The lyric, the pastoral, the epic, are abstractions without concrete reality in the world of art. Poets do not really write epics, pastorals, lyrics, however much they may be deceived by these false abstractions; they express themselves, and this expression is their only form. There are not, therefore, only three, or ten, or a hundred literary kinds; there are as many kinds as there are individual poets. But it is in the field of literary history that this error is most obvious. Shakespears wrote *King Lear, Venus and Adonis,* and a sequence of sonnets. What becomes of Shakespeare, the creative artist, when these three works are separated from one another by the historian of poetry; when they lose their connection with his single creative soul, and are classified with other works with which they have only a loose and vague relation? To slice up the history of English literature into compartments marked comedy, tragedy, lyric, and the like, is to be guilty of a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of Criticism; and literary history becomes a logical absurdity when its data are not organically related but cut up into sections, and placed in such compartments as these. Only in one sense has any of these terms any profound significance, and that is the use of the word "lyric" to represent the free expressiveness of art. All art is lyrical,—the *Divine Comedy, King Lear,* Rodin's "Thinker," the Parthenon, a Corot landscape, a Bach fugue, or Isadora Duncan's dancing, as much as the songs of Heine or Shelley.

We have done with the comic, the tragic, the sublime, and an army of vague abstractions of their kind. These have grown out of the generalizations of the Alexandrian critics, acquiring a new lease of life in the eighteenth century. Gray and his friend West corresponded with each other on the subject of the sublime; later, Schiller distinguished between the naïve and the sentimental; Jean Paul defined humor, and Hegel defined the tragic. If these terms represent the content of art, they may be relegated to the same category as joy, hate, sorrow, enthusiasm; and we should speak of the comic in the same general way in which

Abstract classifications

we might speak of the expression of joy in a poem. If, on the other hand, these terms represent abstract classifications of poetry, their use in criticism sins against the very nature of art. Every poet re-expresses the universe in his own way, and every poem is a new and independent expression. The tragic does not exist for Criticism, but only Æschylus and Calderón, Shakespeare and Racine. There is no objection to the use of the word tragic as a convenient label for somewhat similar poems, but to find laws for the tragic and to test creative artists by such laws as these is simply to give a more abstract form to the outworn classical conception of dramatic rules.

Rhetorical theory

We have done with the theory of style, with metaphor, simile, and all the paraphernalia of Græco-Roman rhetoric. These owe their existence to the assumption that style is separate from expression, that it is something which may be added or subtracted at will from the work of art, a flourish of the pen, an external embellishment, instead of the poet's individual vision of reality, "the music of his whole manner of being." But we know that art *is* expression, that it is complete in itself, that to alter it is to create another expression, and therefore to create another work of art. If the poet, for example, says of springtime that "'Tis now the blood runs gold," he has not employed a substitute for something else, such as "the blood tingles in our veins"; he has expressed his thought in its completeness, and there is no equivalent for his expression except itself.

> "Each perfect in its place; and each content
> With that perfection which its being meant."

Such expressions are still called metaphors in the text-books; but metaphor, simile, and all the old terms of classical rhetoric are signs of the zodiac, magical incantations, astrological formulæ, interesting only to antiquarian curiosity. To Montaigne they suggested "the prattle of chambermaids"; to me they suggest rather the drone and singsong of many schoolmistresses. We still hear talk of the "grand style," and essays on style continue to be written, like the old "arts of poetry" of two centuries ago. But the theory of styles has

no longer a real place in modern thought; we have learned that it is no less impossible to study style as separate from the work of art than to study the comic as separate from the work of the comic artist.

Moral judgment of literature

We have done with all moral judgment of literature. Horace said that pleasure and profit are the end of art, and for many centuries the critics quarreled over the terms "pleasure" and "profit." Some said that poetry was meant to instruct; some, merely to please; some, to do both. Romantic criticism first enunciated the principle that art has no aim except expression; that its aim is complete when expression is complete; that "beauty is its own excuse for being." It is not the function of poetry to further any moral or social cause, any more than it is the function of bridge-building to further the cause of Esperanto. If the achievement of the poet be to express any material he may select, and to express it with a completeness that we recognize as perfection, obviously morals can play no part in the judgment which Criticism may form of his work. To say that poetry is moral or immoral is as meaningless as to say that an equilateral triangle is moral and an isosceles triangle immoral, or to speak of the immorality of a musical chord or a Gothic arch. It is only conceivable in a world in which dinner table convesation runs after this fashion: "This cauliflower would be good if it had only been prepared in accordance with international law." "Do you know why my cook's pastry is so good? Because he has never told a lie or seduced a woman." We do not concern ourselves with morals when we test the engineer's bridge or the scintist's researches; indeed we go farther, and say that it is the moral duty of the scientist to disregard any theory of morals in his search for truth. Beauty's world is remote from both these standards; she aims neither at morals nor at truth. Her imaginary creations, by definition, make no pretence to reality, and cannot be judged by reality's tests. The poet's only moral duty, as a poet, is to be true to his art, and to express his vision of reality as well as he can. If the ideals enunciated by poets are not those which we admire most, we

must blame not the poets but ourselves; in the world where morals count we have failed to give them the proper material out of which to rear a nobler edifice. No critic of authority now tests literature by the standards of ethics.

Dramatic criticism

We have done with the confusion between drama and the theatre which has permeated dramatic criticism for over half a century. The theory that the drama is not a creative art, but a mere product of the physical exigencies of the theatre, is as old as the sixteenth century. An Italian scholar of that age was the first to maintain that plays are intended to be acted on a stage, under certain restricted physical conditions, and before a large and heterogeneous crowd; dramatic performance has developed out of these conditions, and the test of its excellence is therefore the plasure it gives to the mixed audience that supports it. This idea was taken hold of by some of the German romanticists, for the purpose of justifying the Shakespearean drama in its apparent divergence from the classical "rules." Shakespeare cannot be judged by the rules of the Greek theatre (so ran their argumnt), for the drama is an inevitable product of theatrical conditions; these conditions in Elizabethan England were not the same as those of Periclean Athens; and it is therefore absurd to judge Shakespeare's practice by that of Sophocles. Here at least the idea helped to bring Shakespeare home to many new hearts by ridding the age of mistaken prejudices, and served a useful purpose, as a specious argument may persuade men to contribute to a noble work, or a mad fanatic may rid the world of a tyrant. But with this achievement its usefulness but not its life was ended. It has been developed into a system, and become a dogma of dramatic critics; it is our contemporary equivalent for the "rules" of seventeenth-century pedantry. As a matter of fact, the dramatic artist is to be judged by no other standard than that applied to any other creative artist: what has he tried to express, and how has he expressed it? It is true that the theatre is not only an art but a business, and the so-called "success" of a play is of vital interest to the theatre insofar as it is a commercial undertaking. "The success may justify the play-

wright," said an old French critic, "but it may not be so easy to justify the success." The test of "success" is an economic test, and concerns not art or the criticism of art, but political economy. Valuable contributions to economic and social history have been made by students who have investigated the changing conditions of the theatre and the vicissitudes of taste on the part of theatrical audiences; but these have the same relation to Criticism, and to the drama as an art, that a history of the publisher's trade and its influence on the personal fortunes of poets would bear to the history of poetry.

Technique

We have done with technique as separate from art. It has been pointed out that style cannot be disassociated from art; and the false air of science which the term "technique" seems to possess should not blind us to the fact that it too involves the same error. "Technique is really personality; that is the reason why the artist cannot teach it, why the pupil cannot learn it, and why the æsthetic critic can understand it," says Oscar Wilde, in a dialogue on "The Critic as Artist," which, amid much perversity and paradox, is illumined by many flashes of strange insight. The technique of poetry cannot be separated from its inner nature. Versification cannot be studied by itself, except loosely and for convenience; it remains always an inherent quality of the single poem. No two poets ever write in the same metre. Milton's line:—

"These my sky-robes spun out of Iris' woof"

is called an iambic pentameter; but it is not true that artistically it has something in common with every other line possessing the same succession of syllables and accents; in this sense it is not an iambic pentameter; it is only one thing; it is the line:—

"These my sky-robes spun out of Iris' woof."

Poetic themes

We have done with the history and criticism of poetic themes. It is possible to speak loosely of the handling of such a theme as Prometheus by Æschylus and by Shelley, of the story of Francesca di Rimini, by Dante, Stephen Phillips, and D'Annunzio, or the story of King Arthur by Malory and Tennyson; but strictly

speaking, they are not employing the same theme at all. Each artist is expressing a certain material and labeling it with an historic name. For Shelley Prometheus is only a label; he is expressing his artistic conception of life, not the history of a Greek Titan. It is the vital flame he has breathed into his work that makes it what it is, and with this vital flame (and not with labels) the critic should concern himself in the works of poets. The same answer must be given to those critics who insist on the use of contemporary material in poetry, and praise the poets whose subjects are drawn from the life of our own time. But even if it were possible for critics to determine in advance the subject-matter of poetry or to impose subjects on poets, how can a poet deal with anything but contemporary material? How can a twentieth-century poet, even when he imagines that he is concerned with Greek or Egyptian life, deal with any subject but the life of his own time, except in the most external and superficial detail? Cynics have said since the first outpourings of men's hearts, "There is nothing new in art; there are no new subjects." But the very reverse is true. There are no old subjects"; every subject is new as soon as it has been transformed by the imagination of the poet.

Taine's theory

We have done with the race, the time, the environment of a poet's work as an element in Criticism. To study these phases of a work of art is to treat it as an historic or social document, and the result is a contribution to the history of culture or civilization, with only a subsidiary interest for the history of art. "Granted the times, the environment, the race, the passions of the poet, what has he done with his materials, how has he converted poetry out of reality?" To answer this question of the Italian De Sanctis as it refers to each single work of art is to perform what is truly the critic's vital function; this is to interpret "expression" in its rightful sense, and to liberate æsthetic Criticism from the vassalage to *Kulturgeschichte* imposed on it by the school of Taine.

We have done with the "evolution" of literature. The concept of progress was first applied to literature in the seventeenth century, but at the very outset Pascal pointed out that a distinction must here be made between science and art; that science advances by accumulation of knowledge, while the changes of art cannot be reduced to any theory of progress. As a matter of fact, the theory involves the ranking of poets according to some arbitrary conception of their value; and the ranking of writers in order of merit has become obsolete, except in the "hundred best books" of the last decade and the "five-foot shelves" of yesterday. The later nineteenth century gave a new air of verisimilitude to this old theory by borrowing the term "evolution" from science; but this too involves a fundamental misconception of the free and original movement of art. A similar misconception is involved in the study of the "origins" of art; for art has no origin separate from man's life.

Evolution of literature

> "In climes beyond the solar road,
> Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam,
> The Muse has broke the twilight-gloom;"

but though she wore savage raiment, she was no less the Muse. Art is simple at times, complex at others, but it is always art. The simple art of early times may be studied with profit; but the researches of anthropology have no vital significance for Criticism, unless the anthropologist studies the simplest forms of art in the same spirit as its highest; that is, unless the anthropologist is an æsthetic critic.

Finally, we have done with the old rupture between genius and taste. When Criticism first propounded as its real concern the oft-repeated question: "What has the poet tried to express and how has he expressed it?" Criticism prescribed for itself the only possible method. How can the critic answer this question without becoming (if only for a moment of supreme power) at one with the creator? That is to say, taste must reproduce the work of art within itself in order to understand and judge it; and at that moment æsthetic judgment becomes nothing more nor less than creative art itself. The identity of genius

Genius and taste

and taste is the final achievement of modern thought on the subject of art, and it means that fundamentally, in their most significant moments, the creative and the critical instincts are one and the same. From Goethe to Carlyle, from Carlyle to Arnold, from Arnold to Symons, there has been much talk of the "creative function" of Criticism. For each of these men the phrase held a different content; for Arnold it meant merely that Criticism creates the intellectual atmosphere of the age,—a social function of high importance, perhaps, yet wholly independent of æsthetic significance. But the ultimate truth toward which these men were tending was more radical than that, and plays havoc with all the old platitudes about the sterility of taste. Criticism at last can free itself of its age-long self-contempt, now that it may realize that æsthetic judgment and artistic creation are instinct with the same vital life. This identity does not sum up the whole life of the complex and difficult art of Criticism, but without it Criticism would really be impossible. "Genius is to æsthetics what the ego is to philosophy, the only supreme and absolute reality," said Schelling; and without subduing the mind to this transcendental system, it remains true that what must always be inexplicable to mere reflection is just what gives power to poetry; that intellectual curiosity may amuse itself by asking its little questions of the silent sons of light, but they vouchsafe no answer to art's pale shadow, thought; the gods are kind if they give up their secret in another work of art, the art of Criticism, that serves as some sort of mirror to the art of literature, only because in their flashes of insight taste and genius are one.

THE CONTEMPORARY CRITIC

By EDWARD GARNETT

In considering the province of contemporary criticism it may be well to begin by examining how fundamental differences of mental attitude lead men into different schools. The watchword of one school is Authority,[1] the aim of the other is Interpretation.

The critic as judge

First let us accept the critic's delicate position. It is no objection to him, as is confusedly felt, that he is a self-appointed judge. The value of his pronouncements lies in their *justice,* and not, as the vulgar hold, in their issuing from a high and impressive seat of judgment. But how if the word critic, down the long centuries, has attached to itself shades of meaning at odds with the idea of justice? Styling themselves the judges, the discerners (*κρινω, separate*), have not the contemporary critics shown themselves, to the mind of disillusioned generations, kith and kin with the fault-finders? Is it not that the word critic, in general, suggests to men an inimical shadow hastening to run before slow-footed justice? and where are men more sure of disinterring old criticism than from the learned grave of error? A curious fact this, that when men hear the word Judge, their thoughts turn towards the justice administered, but when they hear the word Critic, they are simply apprehensive; they wait as men expecting *anything.* And they are rarely disappointed!

They are rarely disappointed because the critic's utility, and liberty of delivering judgment being conceded, and since his is the right to construe everything as he pleases, there remains only *his own relation to his subject* to be settled. Nothing can there be, or ought there to be, to prevent the critic from seizing those special vantage grounds, whence his sub-

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Mr. Garnett, a son of Dr. Richard Garnett, is a well known English critic. He published in 1917 a study of Turgenev.

[1]"The first and most indispensable (condition) is the acknowledgment of the principle of Authority."—Professor Courthope's "Law in Taste," p. 431.

ject seen from above, or below, or askew, can be caught at some angle, in focus or out of focus, at his will, and so, either revealed or contorted, be thrust upon the watching audience. But the critic must vindicate his right to his supreme liberty of movement and use of vantage ground, by proving to us that his formidable cleverness, his persuasiveness, his elastic manipulations, re-adjustments and interpretations are in the service of his passion for justice, or are inspired by his delicate sense of his relation to his subject. For this relation of the critic to his subject may be purely arbitrary. Anything he may draw from the deep wells of his misunderstanding, if delivered oracularly, is in fact the impressive judgment the crowd accepts! Is not the average critic's anxiety to show his superiority over his subject, at all costs, proof that his ideal of justice is justice for *himself?* And have not the majority of critics of every generation been thereby subtly led to commit critical *felo-de-se?* Therefore we may look curiously and with an intent eye at those hosts of critics who put themselves before their subjects, who put themselves first, a long, long way first, and their subjects last. Such critics may on occasion utter good and searching criticisms, but does not occasional justice bring the judges into contempt? Seeking a more convincing basis for judgment let us put the self-seekers for the time aside.

II

Justice in criticism

But how can the critic be just? Just to *what?* It is by the world of standards that the critic carries within himself that he defines himself. And these standards imply his prejudices, his limitations, his partialities no less than his insight, his potency, his illumination of spirit. Of such a web is his judgment strangely woven; and by the respective worlds that this web stretches over today shall we define each modern critic as ranged in one of two classes—academic or contemporary. Each has his separate standards, each dispenses a different justice, the first the deferred justice of a Court of Appeal, the second that of an Arbitrator. Of the third, the journalistic pseudo-critic which our hasty age

has fabricated to serve its hasty purpose, *his* justice is that of a crowd in motion. The Court of Appeal's justice springs from a resifting of accumulated evidence, the Arbitrator's justice from swift insight into contending forces —the age and the man. Whose task is more puzzling? If a strange darkness descends not rarely upon the academic critics, upon those elect men, privileged to judge the buried past, who cast their purged gaze towards the Olympian peaks of literature standing out clear and well-defined beyond the confused and shifting foregrounds of our age, if on *them* descends the darkness, what misty seas of error, continually sweeping up from modern plains, must envelop the contemporary critic? How to be just to our contemporaries, when the "movements" and the needs of the generation continually force the critic to shift his ground hastily, in order to keep the range of the advancing and passing contemporary crowds? What *standards* is the contemporary critic to be just to? Must not, after all, every critic's aim be to fight for his own special creed in the *mêlée* of contemporary movements, and must not he break lances with all men who bar his passage? If, for example, like Mr. Andrew Lang, he carry within himself a praisworthy passion for what is "old and seasoned,"[1] or like Señor Valdés[2] he mourn over the decadence of modern literature, must he not strive to close with his strait creed the mouth of this unworthy generation? The answer is—Assuredly he must, and by the nature of his insight into the movements of his day shall we class him as an academic[3] or contemporary critic, or merely as an engrossed indefatigable journalist. Assuredly it is the honourable task of the academic critic, of the scholar, and of many

The academic critic

[1]We ought to aim at excellence of matter and form, and we may be content to think that *all goodness of form is old,* and is not fantastic."—"Literature in the Nineteenth Century": Essay by Andrew Lang.

[2]"I cast my eye over Europe, and I see nothing in poetry and painting but lugubrious and prosaic scenes, and in music I hear nothing but sounds of death."—"The Decadence of Modern Literature": Essay by Señor Valdés.

[3]"The ability and success with which the journalist discharges his functions naturally excite emulation among those who practise the fine arts. They imitate his methods. Hence they are led to Realism in the choice of subject. Impressionism . . ."—Professor Courthope, "Law in Taste." (Fielding and Sterne we see are thus accounted for!—E. G.)

a fine spirit to rally in the defence of the "old and seasoned" and uphold the cause of great literature, and be deaf to the interested shouts of the market place and the present-day turmoil. So strong may that instinct be that we find Joubert, that finest of spirits, would admit to the shelves of his library neither Voltaire nor Rousseau, for fear of contamination! though probably Mr. Lang, who bars the great Russian author Tolstoy, and the great Scandinavian, Ibsen, has decided that Voltaire and Rousseau are "old and seasoned" enough to be innocuous reading, both for the crowd and for himself. Certainly the academic critic, strong in every age, from the days of the Alexandrians to the days of M. Brunetière, will be always with us, and in this hour of commercialism in letters and of the Americanization of the world, he deserves that fine gold should be intertwined in his professional laurels. Whether he directs his age from an Oxford Chair, or whether he illumine the pages of illustrated "weeklies," his brave stand for good literature, for classic literature, for the literature that the happy inspiration of the ages has led him to reconsecrate solemnly, will see him enrolled, if not in the ranks of the immortals, assuredly in the ranks of their cupbringers and their torchbearers. "They loved the old, good literature that the common man passed by." That is in itself a just and noble epitaph for the true academic critic. But many are the methods of advancing the cause of good literature, and we humbly urge that the favourite method of the academic critic, that of refusing entrance to the spirit, taste, and tendency of his time,[1] would almost disqualify the contemporary critic from exercising his functions.[2] The web of the contemporary

[1] " . . . the modern artist, in opposition to ancient practice, either ignores the necessity of finding his groundwork in the selection of a subject common to himself and his audience or insists on his right of treating his subject without regard to the public taste or experience. Every one can see for himself that this is the way in which an essentially modern artist like Ibsen constructs his plays."—Professor Courthope, "Law in Taste."

[2] "It has been a great century in letters, but its earlier glories in letters are little studied (with a few exceptions), and the literature of the moment is only in one way encouraging. It cannot well be worse; it is the dark hour before the dawn."—Andrew Lang, "Literature in the Nineteenth Century."

critic's mind is otherwise woven. So complex and diverse are the worlds of modern tendency, which the critic's web must stretch to and embrace today, that one quality, receptivity, must be inherent in the fibre of the contemporary critic's mind. The critic who, in the cause of good literature, or in the cause of "seasoned literature," is fond of waving various manifestations of contemporary literature aside,[1] he who refuses to examine certain aspects, and he who forbids life to manifest itself in this or that fashion through literature,[2] is in fact seeking to dictate to life the new forces of its growth and the new horizons. A serious, an invaluable academic critic he may be, but all the same a partisan of the classics, priding himself on fencing out from his palisaded enclosure that upheaving modern world which must evolve new forms in art, new ideas, formulas, styles and jargons, or else drop back into scholasticism, imitation, and conventionalism of form. The academic critic's contention at bottom amounts to this—that life should express itself only by certain *authorized* forms of literature, and literature should not be free to work out new channels for life's expression.[3] So perchance ought it to be! but fortunately so it is not. How have the "authorized forms" been attained, we may ask, if not through the uncouth beginnings, the ceaseless experiments of successive generations? And no amount of critically applying the standards of culture of bygone ages to the literature and art of a present generation can appreciably modify a "movement's" evolution; every new literary movement, renaissance,

The contemporary critic

[1] "Meanwhile we must endure constant exhibitions of crude and one-sided experiments, 'symbolism,' adventures in odd metres, tales without beginning or end, or interest, uncouth attempts at phonetic reproduction of rude dialects, mincing euphuisms, miscalled 'style,' and many other tribulations, among them flocks of imitations of everything that has a week's success."—Andrew Lang. *Ibid.*

[2] "Great stores of 'realism,' 'naturalism,' Ibsenism, decadence, and art according to Maeterlinck, have been unloaded on a public, which, lectured out of its natural human tastes, is already reverting to them."—Andrew Lang. *Ibid.*

[3] "The standards of poetry have been fixed long ago by certain inspired writers whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question."—*Edinburgh Review,* No. i. p. 63. "On Southey and his School."

whether long lasting or transitory in its effects must spring largely from fresh needs and outlooks, and from the new vistas opened by life to each successive generation.

The proper critical procedure

This being so, in order to be *just* to any school of writers, to any literary movement of any period, must not the critic first try and investigate the mental outlook arising from the social conditions of the life of which any school is a manifestation? of which it is a revelation? to which it is a contradiction? Must we not first of all examine the author's attitude in relation to the prevailing tendencies round him? We may often, of course, not succeed in discovering how a particular writer has been fertilized by his age, and certain writers seem to spring up independently of their environment; but, in considering the main body of the literature of the generation, will not the main proposition from which the contemporary critic should start be something as follows:

All literature is documentary evidence on mind or life. Every age seems to produce in the bulk of its literature, those varieties of special literary food which are best calculated to nourish the prevailing conceptions of life; and simultaneously from the community's ranks (always silently developing fresh unseen forces) constantly there emerge fresh men bringing with them new conceptions and new forms, which challenge the old forms and conceptions. Now when critics are found strenuously contending against new schools of writers, and new forces,[1] they are nearly always showing their blindness to the forces of life working in and behind these writers, and so they have not the scale by which to render justice to its literature.[2] Irritated by new methods, new ferments and un-

[1] "A splenetic and idle discontent with the existing institutions of society seems to be at the bottom of all their serious and peculiar sentiments."—*Edinburgh Review* on "Southey and Coleridge."

[2] "From the steppes of Russia come delirious mystics who work up the country of Molière, Rabelais and Voltaire. From thence surge unwholesome analyses and scandalous improprieties, that corrupt the sons of Cervantes." —Señor Valdés.

couth experiments,[1] these critics do not understand that even foolish fashions, if you will, of contemporary literature do "show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." The critic may indeed say to contemporary writers: "By all the tests of good literature I find your standards execrable," but should we not require from contemporary criticism a justice more explanatory and more penetrating? "The law does not deal with a man's motives, but only with the result of his actions" is a principle in jurisprudence consistently set aside by all the great critics of human life. And certainly that finer justice by which the critic seeks to *place* each man's performance, will lead him first to inquire—what necessity in *you,* what inheritance, what outcome of what conditions give you your character, and make you the mouthpiece of the life which you represent to us? This is the finer justice, that which considers literature not as fruit detached from the tree, the soil, the climate, the influences which have brought it forth, but that which shows its human meaning, its curious value in relation to the contemporary attitude of mind it bodies forth. If the critic does not pursue this method, but seeks to fix the value of his age's literature by reference to the æsthetic standards of the literature of the past, we shall find him denying "excellence" to whole schools of literature,[2] or disdaining to inquire into the significance of the really significant tendencies of his age.[3] We shall find him, in short, failing to show that *passion for justice,* that delicate sense of

[1] "New sentiments and new images others may produce; but to attempt any further improvement of versification will be dangerous. Art and diligence have now done their best, and what shall be added will be effort of tedious toil, and needless curiosity."—"Life of Pope." Johnson's Works, xi. pp. 194, 195.

[2] "The same rule applies to continental literature. 'Decadence' and reaction from Decadence (as in M. Rostand); 'Realism' and reaction from Realism; social philosophies, striving to take literary form (as in Tolstoy); theories and contending critical slogans meet us everywhere, but we find little spontaneous genius, little permanent excellence."—Andrew Lang, "Literature in the Nineteenth Century."

[3] "So when there appears one of these ostentatious, enormous, wearisome works, enveloped in vagueness and mystery, full of symbolical and mystical aspirations, like many of the Romantic Schools of the past, and nearly all of the modern naturalists, symbolists, and decadents, the public is delighted," &c.—Señor Valdés, "The Decadence of Modern Literature."

his relation to his subject, which should lead him to interpret his age's productions. We shall find him, finally, ranging himself amidst that host of critics, who, avowedly fighting the cause of good literature, often ignore, misread, and misinterpret in their day that very literature which is good.[1]

III

The contemporary critic's duty

What, then, is the contemporary critic's duty? He cannot hope to do more than fix a provisional value on the literature of his day. But his aim must surely be (*a*) to discover in the great mass of literary "matter" the fresh creative spirits bringing new illuminations, new valuations into literature and life; (*b*) to set down the characteristics of those contemporary documents which *do* betray to the age "his form and pressure" and (*c*) to detect the forces underlying the literary movements, and explain the nature of the life which determines their qualities. He aims at justice thereby; and though he rarely attains it, perhaps his verdict on the newcomers, whom he greets, is about as useful as that pronounced by the academic critic upon the ages which have fled far from him. Let us apply this humble scheme of the critic's duty to some of the literary "signs and portents" on our horizon.

IV

Contemporary literature

What are the manifestations of contemporary literature? What does authority say? "The literature of the moment is only in one way encouraging. It cannot well be worse: it is the dark hour before the dawn," says the distinguished critic whom we have already quoted. But why, why are the critics always longing for the dawn instead of rejoicing in the deluge? For is it not the hour of deluge and of no dawn that arrives, and of a still more wonderful deluge tomorrow? Looking at the seas of modern

[1] "Mr. Wordsworth's diction has nowhere any pretence to elegance or dignity. . . . Alice Fell is 'trash.' . . . The poem on the Cuckoo is 'absurd.' 'The Ode on Immortality' is 'the most illegible and unintelligible part of the whole publication. . . . We venture to hope that there is now an end of this folly'."—*Edinburgh Review*, xxxiv. 203.

literature before us, around us, advancing upon us, and recalling the text "The fountains of the great deep were broken up . . . and the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth," it may be asked: Is not this literary inundation indeed the uncontrollable expression of modern life, of its rushing volume, and is not the critic's vocation to face with a spirit curious, undaunted, free, this literature's far-circling expanse, rejoicing in ascertaining its depths and racing currents and all the portents of its babbling shallows? Can any agency assuage, or academic precept stem, this incalculable flood?

What is the special note of this literature that "cannot well be worse"? Vulgarity and banality, some will answer. "The note of emancipation from certain human decencies," Mr. Lang replies;[1] but does not a broader note in our literature's voluminous voice, one of a deeper import, force itself upon us? Shall we not rather recognize that modern life's fecundity, diversity, and complexity, along with its vulgarity, are being marvellously mirrored by the literature of our time,[2] that our literature breathes that spirit of expansion whereby the modern man's horizons are constantly enlarged, and whereby he is today, no less than yesterday, exploring, seizing, and developing the illimitable fields of life and thought stretching for his annexation and investigation. And is not our literature, in the main, one of sympathetic curiosity and keen inquiry as to the thousands of roads life is going.[3]

[1] "The note of the early century was that of emancipation from rules which had always been conventional, the rules of French criticism under Louis XIV. The note of the closing century is emancipation from certain human decencies."—Andrew Lang, "Literature in the Nineteenth Century."

[2] To take only the fifty writers best known to us in England as creative artists who have produced their main work since 1860 (the year that marks for Mr. Lang "the degeneracy of literature") we may cite: Meredith, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Tchekov, Björnson, Ibsen, Maupassant, Walt Whitman, Henry James, Anatole France, Howells, Nietzsche, Jules Lemaitre, the Goncourts, Zola, Bourget, Pater, Rossetti, Swinburne, Morris, Maeterlinck, Heredia, Mallarmé, Verlaine, Serao, Fogazzaro, Carducci, D'Anunzio, Negri, Sienkiewicz, Spielhagen, Hauptmann, Sudermann, Couperus, Verhaeren, Valdés, Jonas Lie, Jacobson, Hardy, Henley, Stevenson, Mark Twain, Sarah Orne Jewett, Miss Thackeray, Miss Wilkins, Daudet, Robert Bridges, Jokai, Orzeszko.

[3] "I can at all events attempt without undue temerity to discover the common tendency of writers of today. You meet, I think, almost everywhere an aversion to the conventional, the artificial, and a patient and persistent search for Nature, reality and truth."—Jules Pravieux. "On Contemporary French Literature," *Athenæum*, July 6, 1901.

Wherever the civilized man places his foot, in whatsoever spot of the globe he finds his habitation, there is contemporary literature speedily recording *him,* and so adding to the old world's realization of its new life.[1] Centuries to come, looking back on our generation's literature, will see in it the ceaseless movement and expansion that characterize our day. Now, if our literature brings to men's cognizance so fully the variegated life of European societies, its decadence in those "centres" where decadence is[2] and its vigorous expansion where growth is,[3] does it not accomplish its mission? Can the literature of decaying communities and the literature of the new peoples beyond sea alike gain sincerity by their spiritual adjustment to classic models? Yet the academic critic's dissatisfaction with modern literature poises itself delicately on the vast and rounded contention that they can and should.[4] If we have to endure, in Mr. Lang's words, "constant exhibitions of crude and one-sided experiments," "symbolism, adventures in odd metres, etc.," may we not recognize that these "one-sided" experiments cry aloud with the great voice of Culture which has taught the general public to become articulate, which has opened a way for the yeasty waters of popular literature and carried them over the breakwaters of the Academies and the "literary men," and over the quiet beaches sacred to the "fine spirit"? Must we not recognize as kindred phenomena of one and the same great spectacle—

Our literature and our life

Our culture-ridden age

[1]Stevenson in the South Seas; Pierre Loti in Indo-China; Stephen Crane in Mexico; Joseph Conrad in Malaya; Henry Lawson in Australia; Maxim Gorky in South Russia; V. Korolenko in Siberia, &c. &c.

[2]Huysman, Eckhoud, Pierre Louys, Catulle Mendes, &c.

[3]Bret Harte, Rudyard Kipling, Hamlin Garland, &c.

[4]"The most marked characteristic in the contemporary art and literature of every country in Europe is the pursuit of Novelty; by which word I mean not the freshness, character, and individuality, which are essential to every work of genius, but the determination to discover absolutely new *matter* for artistic treatment. . . . The causes of Poetical Decadence . . . are moral not physical."—Professor Courthope, "Law in Taste."

the world's progress—the facts that, on the other hand, never was a generation more culture ridden than ours, never were there so many "Classics for the Million" and "World Classics," so many "Edited Texts," "Golden Treasuries," and "Globe Libraries," so many "Temple Shakespeare's" and "Century Scotts," so many "Manuals of Literature," "Literary Histories" and "Histories of Literature," so many "Standard Editions" and "Complete Works"; never were there so many "Royal Roads" and "Extension Lectures," and certified professors of literature and language, so many registered teachers and scholarly expounders of all the standards that the academic critics deem to be "old and excellent"—nay, is not the *Daily Mail* itself edited by young Oxford and Cambridge scholars?—and yet, yet on the other hand this is the age of "The Sorrows of Satan" and Miss Marie Corelli's other novels, of "The Eternal City," and Mr. Hall Caine's novels running into *their* millions of copies; and of Mr. Guy Boothby and *his* hundreds of thousands of copies. Does it not almost look as if it were the successful application of the "sweetness and light" of the classics to the Philistine soul of our world that has aroused the great general public to manifest itself in literature, and to pour from the floodgates of its consciousness that whirling sea which "cannot well be worse"? And while academic teaching and the literary deluge synchronize, is it possible that we shall not get rid of either in this inspiring modern world? Is it possible that we are merely viewing two phantasmagorial aspects of one and the same ingenious spectacle?

V

Contemporary literature as documentary evidence

In any case, whether it be the diffusion of superficial culture which assists the depraved human mind to produce the bulk of popular literature, must not the contemporary critic accept that wider standpoint which involves a recognition of the "bulk" as "the literature of the self-education of the crowd"—the mental food necessary to its present state of development? And will he not better seize its significance,

and indeed render it absolute justice by treating it as *documentary evidence* of the community's mental outlook, needs, wishes, and states of feeling?[1] Is not the crowd trying to get into the whole house of modern literature, and find out its life there, and is there not today such a noise and confusion, such a banging of doors and opening of windows that the house is rendered temporarily uninhabitable to the "fine spirit"? And are not the most "popular" writers very, very insignificant as creators, but plainly significant as the instructors, the overseers, the spokesmen of the community's ignorance?[2] If the critics would only recognize as a national drama this surprising unlocking of the doors of our heterogeneous General Public's consciousness and its flinging itself outwards into literature, eager to bring its world into violent and familiar contact with the great stream of life flowing outside it, would they not fix the valuations of this literature, get all round it, see into its meaning, and thereby place it better than by simply condemning it as not in harmony with certain æsthetic canons. We are all witnessing today the phenomenon of the culture of the community not being *grown* slowly from the deep roots of its life (by which slow growth for example, flowered the exquisite poetry and exquisite arts of many old-world peasantries), but beng transplanted, imported, and administered by the Press, the academies, and other wholesale agencies for indiscriminate consumption. And the unassimilated "culture" of our modern commercialized world is the ferment in the hasty brew of "popular" work.[3] It is the chief source of

Unassimilated culture

[1]For example, the rise today of a pseudo-realistic, pseudo-romantic school of fiction (examples, Mr. Anthony Hope's "Rupert of Hentzau," Miss Fowler's "The Double Thread") suggests that the great middle-class public is suffering from an indigestion of culture and a chaos of ideals.

[2]"Hall Caine's 'Eternal City' is a great novel revealing the author at the very zenith of his gift. . . . The book's greatest wealth is its wealth of contagious and engrossing emotion. It is a triumph of imagination, of power over the feelings, as it is of dexterously used observation of an historic and most interesting and deeply agitated people . . ."—*The Liverpool Daily Post.*

[3]For example, the rise today of a pseudo-realistic, pseudo-romantic school remarkable work "The Eternal City" would be by analysing its caricature of Tolstoyism and by considering its solemn projection of the Suburban Protestant lower-middle-class conscience through the airy medium of Fleet Street sensationalism into the indifferent corridors of the Vatican.

very bad art. Accordingly the contemporary critic, seeing the relation this "culture" bears to society's mental outlook, seeing inevitably why it is prevalent, and the purpose it serves, must discriminate most sharply between the comparatively small bands of artists whose creative instincts shape true works of art for us, and for posterity, and the running multitude of writers whose works reflect the common perishing valuations of our bustling and self-important time. Herein lies the distinction between living and dead criticism. For if the critic fails to detect in the deluge of his day the spirits that being finely creative open new windows for our consciousness, if he confuses what is significant with what offers us a mere face value, he fails. Weary of the deluge, he is in danger of rejecting his age *en bloc* or of hailing, let us say, the achievements of Mr. Rider Haggard, and of being critically disheartened by the "symbolism" of Maeterlinck.

6

Seeking then, in this weltering literary flood today loosed upon us, for talents of special originality which add something really living to literature, and for those documents of life which show the age in meaning outline, the critic understands first that justice implies that receptive spirit, which hastens to recognize each writer's world, listens to his message whatever it may be, and responds to anything individual he is privileged to reveal to us about which other men are dumb. Secondly the critic asks: "Does this talent open to us a new window into the world of men, the world of the mind? Wherein lies the difference between this new window and all the other windows?" And, generally, in the case of those few windows opened for the first time, which are most strange to us, how apt are the critics to have an actual distaste for them,[1] at

Critical justice again

[1]The *Guardian* on Charles Kingsley's "Yeast": "It is the countenance the writer gives to the worst tendencies of the day, and the manner in which he conceals loose morality in a dress of high sounding and philosophic phraseology which calls for plain and decided condemnation." Quoted by Mr. Basil Worsfold in "Judgmgent in Literature."

first refusing to look out of them, and even clamouring to have them blocked up altogether.[1]

But in the majority of cases since the windows, we agree, merely open into the commonplaces of the human mind, then the critic's duty is to see whether but one solitary face looks out or a multitude of contemporary faces. The majority of *littérateurs* in every age are as human wax on which are impressed individual records of the modes of thought, institutions, ethics, fashions, and general forms of life current in their day. The average mind having little original creative power, with which to resist, transform, or appraise the prevailing standards, gives us the *face-value* only of the life around. And the critic, in dealing with this class of literature, will stamp it as the crowd's. Crowds, *en masse,* have too their literature, the writings in ogham, the rock-carvings of their mental state, and in order to do it justice the critic must fix in his criticisms these people's valuations of life, and he must try and get behind their literature and see what it falsifies as well as what it reveals in the nation's life.[2] To subject the bulk of contemporary literature to high æsthetic and literary standards is often simply to *suppress* its significance. As the majority of new works are but the age's ephemeral children, they can only make an appeal to their parent age; the contemporary critic's duty, therefore, is to fix, in the sifinificant documents of the life of his time, the *character* of his age; and to the majority of average works of literature he will do justice by treating them as revelations of the contemporary mind, knowing that though the inner individual spirit of these typical documents may be of very little significance, its testimony to the overlordship of the age may be of very much.

To come back to our starting-point: how can the critic be *just?* If we penetrate into the critics' camp do we not find

[1]See Mr. William Archer's list of first English criticisms on Ibsen's plays, —"Carrion," "Loathsome Putridity," "Shocking Immorality," &c., &c. No. 15, V. 3.—Dec., 1901.

[2]For example, the "immoral passages" of a "scrofulous" French novel often imply there is little to hide and much pretence of immorality. The English novel hides and assumes, equally, certain pretences of the national life.

it pitched at the meeting of many cross roads along which the various critics, asking "What is the value of this new literary field presented to us?" are seen taking each some individual path, some idiosyncratic lane of judgment, whence they obtain some special prospect, but rarely command a wide view of the main lie of the land. So trying to get nearer to just judgment we are led to criticize the critics' relative justice and we then see the critics as men fulfilling dissimilar functions. The rank and file of the army of critics would seem to serve as the faithful janissaries of the main body of the public's prevailing concepts, ethics and mental outlook, janissaries whose function it is to attack all literature that is strange or rare, the assimilation of which may be held to be harmful to the national constitution. (Example. The general English criticism of the French "naturalists.") Other critics stand as the spokesmen of foreign or classic culture, the study of which in their judgment would bring to their nation a wider outlook, finer aims, and clearer self-knowledge, and such critics may be in their turn liable to misjudge the significance of "new windows" opened at home. (Example. Matthew Arnold and his attitude to Tennyson, Browning and other contemporary writers.) Other critics again, enamoured of certain features in the national life may show little justice to writers, "schools" or movements outside their own bracing program. (Example. The critical policy of Mr. Henley's "National Observer.") The critics, in fact, perhaps, should be looked upon less as judges responsive to demands for justice at their gates, than as the priests of literature vowed to their special creeds, to their own particular altars, and deaf to all but the favoured communicants within their sacred walls. When a "new window" is opened revealing a fresh territory to the mind, is not the average critic less anxious to find out what are the special laws of its existence, of what life and what nature it is the outcome, than to establish that this new territory, this new mind, ought, according to such and such literary standards,

The individual critic

to be something rather different from what it is. Undoubtedly this is criticism's chief work; the ushering of the great procession of æsthetic and literary standards to announce to each writer: "You have failed here; you have succeeded there; you are too much yourself, or you yourself are too little." This is the daily work of criticism, the bringing of this Rhadamanthine court to throw its shadow over and efface all productions that are feeble and malformed at birth, the continued existence of which the critic deems injurious to literature itself and to the common good. But this formidable process explains also why most criticism has merely an ephemeral value and administers but partial justice; for in trying to judge where the work arrives in the great road of literature stretching before us, the critic is apt to discuss too much its transitory relations with the surrounding world to which it speaks, and too little its permanent relations with the world from which it has come. If we take up the sorriest pamphlet of (say) the eighteenth century we understand what it is, we see its value as literature and its relation to the life of its age. The critics of its day did not see what it was; they saw what it "ought" to be and therefore their "oughts" passed away in the pomp and show of transient superiority. The critic's "ought" rarely *explains* the meaning of the writer's "is"! The contemporary critic will therefore understand by justice that which explains the "is," finds the illuminating light it casts on life, and does not exclude it from its place, because it "ought" to be rather different from itself.

Criticism's chief work

Thus, looking at the relations of the mass of critics to the literature of their day, the contemporary critic aims first at *interpretation,* knowing that he must be prepared to controvert current opinion, and yet he must sympathize with his age in order to penetrate to its meaning. He is the arbitrator, just or unjust, between the individual men of his age and his age's prevailing tendencies, and accordingly he

The contemporary critic an interpreter of the present

will prove himself less of the censurer and faultfinder the more he shows in his ideal and in his practice that he is the explainer, the demonstrator of what writers introduce or reflect in contemporary life. His aim will be to *account* for authors, to explain them to their age, and their age through them—which will not indeed render them ultimately less dissatisfied with him. He will, however, understand that it is his duty to resist what is bad in literature chiefly by showing what tendency it represents, by tracing what is its relation to contemporary society and the contemporary mind from which it springs. And thus the critic, in inquiring into the significance of the really significant tendencies of his time, will leave to the academic school its watchword of authority as applying to the past, and will find the weapon that can deal with the present, in his chief aim—*Interpretation.*

Finally, the academic and the contemporary critic may be said to rule over different provinces.

The academic critic an upholder of standards

The function of the former may perhaps be defined as "the interpretation of the literature of the past, and the promulgation of the highest literary canons (of the past) in order that good literature (as heretofore understood) may be perpetuated." The academic critic, in any case, gathers in the honours of the last word. Willingly we leave the silent field to his impressive figure. He frowns at the birth of the obscure, but his sense of duty impels him to officiate at the obsequies of the illustrious dead. To him falls, after the lapse of centuries, the most delicate of tasks—the task of marshaling those writers who, by virtue of their qualities, have survived the censure of the academic critics of their own day.

SHAKESPEARE

By LEO TOLSTOI

My disagreement with the established opinion about Shakespeare is not the result of an accidental frame of mind, nor of a light-minded attitude toward the matter, but is the outcome of many years' repeated and insistent endeavors to harmonize my own views of Shakespeare with those established amongst all civilized men of the Christian world.

Tolstoi reading Shakespeare

I remember the astonishment I felt when I first read Shakespeare. I expected to receive a powerful esthetic pleasure, but having read, one after the other, works regarded as his best: "King Lear," "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet" and "Macbeth," not only did I feel no delight, but I felt an irresistible repulsion and tedium, and doubted as to whether I was senseless in feeling works regarded as the summit of perfection by the whole of the civilized world to be trivial and positively bad, or whether the significance which this civilized world attributes to the works of Shakespeare was itself senseless. My consternation was increased by the fact that I always keenly felt the beauties of poetry in every form; then why should artistic works recognized by the whole world as those of a genius,—the works of Shakespeare,—not only fail to please me, but be disagreeable to me? For a long time I could not believe in myself, and during fifty years, in order to test myself, I several times recommenced reading Shakespeare in every possible form, in Russian, in English, in German and in Schlegel's translation, as I was advised. Several times I read the dramas and the comedies and historical plays, and

From *Tolstoy on Shakespeare,* translated by V. Tchertkoff and I. F. M. Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1906. Excerpts allowed through courtesy of the publishers.

Count Leo Tolstoi (1828-1910) has been generally regarded as the greatest literary figure since Goethe. His most famous novel is *Anna Karenina,* begun in 1872, in which the author appears as the character Levin. His stories and plays gradually became didactic, in consequence of theories such as those enunciated in *What is Art?* (1898).

I invariably underwent the same feelings: repulsion, weariness, and bewilderment. At the present time, before writing this preface, being desirous once more to test myself, I have, as an old man of seventy-five, again read the whole of Shakespeare, including the historical plays, the "Henrys," "Troilus and Cressida," the "Tempest," "Cymbeline," and I have felt, with even greater force, the same feelings,—this time, however, not of bewilderment, but of firm, indubitable conviction that the unquestionable glory of a great genius which Shakespeare enjoys, and which compels writers of our time to imitate him and readers and spectators to discover in him non-existent merits, —thereby distorting their esthetic and ethical understanding, —is a great evil, as is every untruth.

Shakespeare not a genius

Although I know that the majority of people so firmly believe in the greatness of Shakespeare that in reading this judgment of mine they will not admit even the possibility of its justice, and will not give it the slightest attention, nevertheless I will endeavor, as well as I can, to show why I believe that Shakespeare can not be recognized either as a great genius, or even as an average author.

For illustration of my purpose I will take one of Shakespeare's most extolled dramas, "King Lear," in the enthusiastic praise of which, the majority of critics agree.

* * * *

Such is this celebrated drama. However absurd it may appear in my rendering (which I have endeavored to make as impartial as possible), I may confidently say that in the original it is yet more absurd. For any man of our time—if he were not under the hynotic suggestion that this drama is the height of perfection—it would be enough to read it to its end (were he to have sufficient patience for this) to be convinced that far from being the height of perfection, it is a very bad, carelessly composed production, which, if it could have been of interest to a certain public at a certain time, can not evoke among us anything but aversion and weariness. Every reader of our

"King Lear" is bad every way

time, who is free from the influence of suggestion, will also receive exactly the same impression from all the other extolled dramas of Shakespeare, not to mention the senseless, dramatized tales, "Pericles," "Twelfth Night," "The Tempest," "Cymbeline," "Troilus and Cressida."

But such free-minded individuals, not inoculated with Shakespeare-worship, are no longer to be found in our Christian society. Every man of our society and time, from the first period of his conscious life, has been inoculated with the idea that Shakespeare is a genius, a poet, and a dramatist, and that all his writings are the height of perfection. Yet, however hopeless it may seem, I will endeavor to demonstrate in the selected drama—"King Lear"—all those faults equally characteristic also of all the other tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare, on account of which he not only is not representing a model of dramatic art, but does not satisfy the most elementary demands of art recognized by all.

Motivation of dramatic action

Dramatic art, according to the laws established by those very critics who extol Shakespeare, demands that the persons represented in the play should be, in consequence of actions proper to their characters, and owing to a natural course of events, placed in positions requiring them to struggle with the surrounding world to which they find themselves in opposition, and in this struggle should display their inherent qualities.

In "King Lear" the persons represented are indeed placed externally in opposition to the outward world, and they struggle with it. But their strife does not flow from the natural course of events nor from their own characters, but is quite arbitrarily established by the author, and therefore can not produce on the reader the illusion which represents the essential condition of art.

Lear has no necessity or motive for his abdication; also, having lived all his life with his daughters, has no reason to believe the words of the two elders and not the truthful statement of the youngest; yet upon this is built the whole tragedy of his position.

Similarly unnatural is the subordinate action: the relation of Gloucester to his sons. The positions of Gloucester and Edgar flow from the circumstance that Gloucester, just like Lear, immediately believes the coarsest untruth and does not even endeavor to inquire of his injured son whether what he is accused of be true, but at once curses and banishes him. The fact that Lear's relations with his daughters are the same as those of Gloucester to his sons makes one feel yet more strongly that in both cases the relations are quite arbitrary, and do not flow from the characters nor the natural course of events. Equally unnatural, and obviously invented, is the fact that all through the tragedy Lear does not recognize his old courtier, Kent, and therefore the relations between Lear and Kent fail to excite the sympathy of the reader or spectator. The same, in a yet greater degree, holds true of the position of Edgar, who, unrecognized by any one, leads his blind father and persuades him that he has leaped off a cliff, when in reality Gloucester jumps on level ground.

These positions, into which the characters are placed quite arbitrarily, are so unnatural that the reader or spectator is unable not only to sympathize with their sufferings but even to be interested in what he reads or sees. This in the first place.

Setting

Secondly, in this, as in the other dramas of Shakespeare, all the characters live, think, speak, and act quite unconformably with the given time and place. The action of "King Lear" takes place 800 years B. C., and yet the characters are placed in conditions possible only in the Middle Ages: participating in the drama are kings, dukes, armies, and illegitimate children, and gentlemen, courtiers, doctors, farmers, officers, soldiers, and knights with vizors, etc. It is possible that such anachronisms (with which Shakespeare's dramas abound) did not injure the possibility of illusion in the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, but in our time it is no longer possible to follow with interest the development of events which one knows could not take place in the conditions which the author de-

scribes in detail. The artificiality of the positions, not flowing from the natural course of events, or from the nature of the characters, and their want of conformity with time and space, is further increased by those coarse embellishments which are continually added by Shakespeare and intended to appear particularly touching. The extraordinary storm during which King Lear roams about the heath, or the grass which for some reason he puts on his head—like Ophelia in "Hamlet"—or Edgar's attire, or the fool's speeches, or the appearance of the helmeted horseman, Edgar—all these effects not only fail to enhance the impression, but produce an opposite effect. "Man sieht die Absicht und man wird verstimmt," as Goethe says. It often happens that even during these obviously intentional efforts after effect, as, for instance, the dragging out by the legs of half a dozen corpses, with which all Shakespeare's tragedies terminate, instead of feeling fear and pity, one is tempted rather to laugh.

But it is not enough that Shakespeare's characters are placed in tragic positions which are impossible, do not flow from the course of events, are inappropriate to time and space —these personages, besides this, act in a way which is out of keeping with their definite character, and is quite arbitrary. It is generally asserted that in Shakespeare's dramas the characters are specially well expressed, that, notwithstanding their vividness, they are many-sided, like those of living people; that, while exhibiting the characteristics of a given individual, they at the same time wear the features of man in general; it is usual to say that the delineation of character in Shakespeare is the height of perfection.

Arbitrary action

This is asserted with such confidence and repeated by all as indisputable truth; but however much I endeavored to find confirmation of this in Shakespeare's dramas, I always found the opposite. In reading any of Shakespeare's dramas whatever, I was, from the very first, instantly convinced that he was lacking in the most important, if not the only, means of portraying characters: in-

Unnatural language

dividuality of language, *i. e.,* the style of speech of every person being natural to his character. This is absent from Shakespeare. All his characters speak, not their own, but always one and the same Shakespearian, pretentious, and unnatural language, in which not only they could not speak, but in which no living man ever has spoken or does speak.

No living men could or can say, as Lear says, that he would divorce his wife in the grave should Regan not receive him, or that the heavens would crack with shouting, or that the winds would burst, or that the wind wishes to blow the land into the sea, or that the curled waters wish to flood the shore, as the gentleman describes the storm, or that it is easier to bear one's grief and the soul leaps over many sufferings when grief finds fellowship, or that Lear has become childless while I am fatherless, as Edgar says, or use similar unnatural expressions with which the speeches of all the characters in all Shakespeare's dramas overflow.

Again, it is not enough that all the characters speak in a way in which no living men ever did or could speak—they all suffer from a common intemperance of language. Those who are in love, who are preparing for death, who are fighting, who are dying, all alike speak much and unexpectedly about subjects utterly inappropriate to the occasion, being evidently guided rather by consonances and play of words than by thoughts. They speak all alike. Lear raves exactly as does Edgar when feigning madness. Both Kent and the fool speak alike. The words of one of the personages might be placed in the mouth of another, and by the character of the speech it would be impossible to distinguish who speaks. If there is a difference in the speech of Shakespeare's various characters, it lies merely in the different dialogs which are pronounced for these characters—again by Shakespeare and not by themselves. Thus Shakespeare always speaks for kings in one and the same inflated, empty language. Also in one and the same Shakespearian, artificially sentimental language speak all the women who are intended to be poetic: Juliet, Desdemona, Cordelia, Imogen, Marina. In the same

way, also, it is Shakespeare alone who speaks for his villains: Richard, Edmund, Iago, Macbeth, expressing for them those vicious feelings which villains never express. Yet more similar are the speeches of the madmen with their horrible words, and those of fools with their mirthless puns. So that in Shakespeare there is no language of living individuals —that language which in the drama is the chief means of setting forth character. If gesticulation be also a means of expressing character, as in ballets, this is only a secondary means. Moreover, if the characters speak at random and in a random way, and all in one and the same diction, as is the case in Shakespeare's work, then even the action of gesticulation is wasted. Therefore, whatever the blind panegyrists of Shakespeare may say, in Shakespeare there is no expression of character. Those personages who, in his dramas, dramas, and they are mostly depicted, not by the dramatic method which consists in making each person speak with his own diction, but in the epic method of one person describing the features of another.

Shakespeare and his sources

The perfection with which Shakespeare expresses character is asserted chiefly on the ground of the characters of Lear, Cordelia, Othello, Desdemona, Falstaff, and Hamlet. But all these characters, as well as all the others, instead of belonging to Shakespeare, are taken by him from dramas, chronicles, and romances anterior to him. All these characters not only are not rendered more powerful by him, but, in most cases, they are weakened and spoilt. This is very striking in this drama of "King Lear," which we are examining, taken by him from the drama "King Leir," by an unknown author. The characters of this drama, that of King Lear, and especially of Cordelia, not only were not created by Shakespeare, but have been strikingly weakened and deprived of force by him, as compared with their appearance in the older drama.

* * * *

If in Shakespeare's dramas one does meet figures having certain characteristic features, for the most part secondary

figures, such as Polonius in "Hamlet" and Portia in "The Merchant of Venice," these few lifelike characters among five hundred or more other secondary figures, with the complete absence of character in the principal figures, do not at all prove that the merit of Shakespeare's dramas consists in the expression of character.

Emotion in Shakespeare's plays

That a great talent for depicting character is attributed to Shakespeare arises from his actually possessing a peculiarity which, for superficial observers and in the play of good actors, may appear to be the capacity of depicting character. This peculiarity consists in the capacity of representative scenes expressing the play of emotion. However unnatural the positions may be in which he places his characters, however improper to them the language which he makes them speak, however featureless they are, the very play of emotion, its increase, and alteration, and the combination of many contrary feelings, as expressed correctly and powerfully in some of Shakespeare's scenes, and in the play of good actors, evokes even, if only for a time, sympathy with the persons represented. Shakespeare, himself an actor, and an intelligent man, knew how to express by the means not only of speech, but of exclamation, gesture, and the repetition of words, states of mind and developments or changes of feeling taking place in the persons represented. So that, in many instances, Shakespeare's characters, instead of speaking, merely make an exclamation, or weep, or in the middle of a monolog, by means of gestures, demonstrate the pain of their position (just as Lear asks some one to unbutton him), or, in moments of great agitation, repeat a question several times, or several times demand the repetition of a word which has particularly struck them, as do Othello, Macduff, Cleopatra, and others. Such clever methods of expressing the development of feeling, giving good actors the possibility of demonstrating their powers, were, and are, often mistaken by many critics for the expression of character. But however strongly the play of feeling may be expressed in one scene, a single scene can

not give the character of a figure when this figure, after a correct exclamation or gesture, begins in a language not its own, at the author's arbitrary will, to volubly utter words which are neither necessary nor in harmony with its character.

* * * *

Need of illusion in art

An artistic, poetic work, particularly a drama, must first of all excite in the reader or spectator the illusion that whatever the person represented is living through, or experiencing, is lived through or experienced by himself. For this purpose it is as important for the dramatist to know precisely what he should make his characters both do and say as what he should not make them say and do, so as not to destroy the illusion of the reader or spectator. Speeches, however eloquent and profound they may be, when put into the mouth of dramatic characters, if they be superfluous or unnatural to the position and character, destroy the chief condition of dramatic art—the illusion, owing to which the reader or spectator lives in the feelings of the persons represented. Without putting an end to the illusion, one may leave much unsaid—the reader or spectator will himself fill this up, and sometimes, owing to this, his illusion is even increased, but to say what is superfluous is the same as to overthrow a statue composed of separate pieces and thereby scatter them, or to take away the lamp from a magic lantern: the attention of the reader or spectator is distracted, the reader sees the author, the spectator sees the actor, the illusion disappears, and to restore it is sometimes impossible; therefore without the feeling of measure there can not be an artist, and especially a dramatist.

Shakespeare lacks measure

Shakespeare is devoid of this feeling. His characters continually do and say what is not only unnatural to them, but utterly unnecessary. I do not cite examples of this, because I believe that he who does not himself see this striking deficiency in all Shakespeare's dramas will not be persuaded by any examples and proofs. It is sufficient to read "King Lear," alone, with its insanity, murders, plucking out of eyes, Gloucester's jump, its poisonings, and wranglings—not to mention "Pericles,"

"Cymbeline," "The Winter's Tale," "The Tempest"—to be convinced of this. Only a man devoid of the sense of measure and of taste could produce such types as "Titus Andronicus" or "Troilus and Cressida," or so mercilessly mutilate the old drama "King Leir."

* * * *

The merit of every poetic work depends on three things:

(1) The subject of the work: the deeper the subject, *i. e.*, the more important it is to the life of mankind, the higher is the work.

Merit in poetry

(2) The external beauty achieved by technical methods proper to the particular kind of art. Thus, in dramatic art, the technical method will be a true individuality of language, corresponding to the characters, a natural, and at the same time touching plot, a correct scenic rendering of the demonstration and development of emotion, and the feeling of measure in all that is represented.

(3) Sincerity, *i. e.*, that the author should himself keenly feel what he expresses. Without this condition there can be no work of art, as the essence of art consists in the contemplation of the work of art being infected with the author's feeling. If the author does not actually feel what he expresses, then the recipient can not become infected with the feeling of the author, does not experience any feeling, and the production can no longer be classified as a work of art.

The subject of Shakespeare's pieces, as is seen from the demonstrations of his greatest admirers, is the lowest, most vulgar view of life, which regards the external elevation of the lords of the world as a genuine distinction, despises the crowd, *i. e.*, the working classes—repudiates not only all religious, but also all humanitarian, strivings directed to the betterment of the existing order.

Shakespeare fails in all essentials

The second condition also, with the exception of the renderings of the scenes in which the movement of feelings is expressed, is quite absent in Shakespeare. He does not grasp the natural character of the positions of his personages, nor the language of the persons represented, nor the feeling of

measure without which no work can be artistic.

The third and most important condition, sincerity, is completely absent in all Shakespeare's works. In all of them one sees intentional artifice; one sees that he is not *in earnest,* but that he is playing with words.

THE STUDY OF POETRY

By MATTHEW ARNOLD

I Touchstones of Poetry

Indeed, there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. Of course, we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar. But if we have any tact we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them. Short passages, even single lines, will serve our turn quite sufficiently. Take the two lines which I have just quoted from Homer, the poet's comment on Helen's mention of her brothers; or take his

Touchstones of poetry

> Ah, unhappy pair, why gave we you to King Peleus, to a mortal? but ye are without old age, and immortal. Was it that with men born to misery ye might know sorrow?—*Iliad,* xvii, 443-5.—

the address of Zeus to the horses of Peleus; or take finally his

> Nay, and thou too, old man, in former days wast, as we hear, happy.—*Iliad,* xxiv, 543.—

the words of Achilles to Priam, a suppliant before him. Take that incomparable line and a half of Dante, Ugolino's tremendous words:

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, famous headmaster of Rugby, was a true poet and a great literary and social critic. He was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, his alma mater, from 1857 to 1867. In 1883-4 he lectured in America, notably upon Emerson. His best-known critical volumes are: *On Translating Homer,* published in 1861; *Essays in Criticism* (1865 and 1888); *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867); *Culture and Anarchy* (1869); *Discourses in America* (1885). The present passages are from *Essays in Criticism,* Second Series.

Arnold of course quotes the original Greek and Italian, which he then translates. I have omitted the first eight pages of the essay.

I wailed not, so of stone grew I within; *they* wailed.—*Inferno,* xxxiii, 39-40.—

Take the lovely words of Beatrice to Virgil:

Of such sort hath God, thanked be His mercy, made me, that your misery toucheth me not, neither doth the flame of this fire strike me.—*Inferno,* ii, 91-93.

Take the simple but perfect single line:

In his will is our peace.—*Paradiso,* iii, 85.

Take of Shakespeare a line or two of Henry the Fourth's expostulation with sleep:

> Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge. . .

and take as well Hamlet's dying request to Horatio:

> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story. . .

Take of Milton that Miltonic passage:

> Darken'd so, yet shone
> Above them all the archangel; but his face
> Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care
> Sat on his faded cheek . .

add two such lines as:

> And courage never to submit or yield
> And what is else not to be overcome . . .

and finish with the exquisite close to the loss of Proserpine, the loss

> . . . which cost Ceres all that pain
> To seek her through the world.

These few lines, if we have tact and can use them, are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgments about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate.

High poetic quality

The specimens I have quoted differ widely from one another, but they have in common this: the possession of the very highest poetical quality. If we are thoroughly penetrated by their power, we shall find that we have acquired a sense enabling us, whatever poetry may be laid before us, to feel the degree

in which a high poetical quality is present or wanting there. Critics give themselves great labor to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples;—to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality, and to say: The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*. They are far better recognized by being felt in the verse of the master, than by being perused in the prose of the critic. Nevertheless, if we are urgently pressed to give some critical account of them, we may safely, perhaps, venture on laying down, not indeed how and why the characters arise, but where and in what they arise. They are in the matter and substance of the poetry, and they are in its manner and style. Both of these, the substance and matter on the one hand, the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent, of high beauty, worth, and power. But if we are asked to define this mark and accent in the abstract, our answer must be: No, for we should thereby be darkening the question, not clearing it. The mark and accent are as given by the substance and matter of that poetry, by the style and manner of that poetry, and of all other poetry which is akin to it in quality.

Only one thing we may add as to the substance and matter of poetry, guiding ourselves by Aristotle's profound observation that the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness. Let us add, therefore, to what we have said, this: that the substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing, in an eminent degree, truth and seriousness. We may add yet further, what is in itself evident, that to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, their accent, is given by their diction, and, even yet more, by their movement. And though we distinguish between the two characters, the two accents, of superiority, yet they are nevertheless vitally connected one with the other. The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its

style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related, and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement, again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and matter.

* * * *

II Chaucer

But in the fourteenth century there comes an Englishman nourished on this poetry;[1] taught his trade by this poetry, getting words, rhyme, meter from this poetry; for even of that stanza which the Italians used, and which Chaucer derived immediately from the Italians, the basis and suggestion was probably given in France. Chaucer (I have already named him) fascinated his contemporaries, but so, too, did Christian of Troyes the Wolfram of Eschenbach. Chaucer's power of fascination, however, is enduring; his poetical importance does not need the assistance of the historic estimate; it is real. He is a genuine source of joy and strength, which is flowing still for us and will flow always. He will be read, as time goes on, far more generally than he is read now. His language is a cause of difficulty for us; but so also, and I think in quite as great a degree, is the language of Burns. In Chaucer's case, as in that of Burns, it is a difficulty to be unhesitatingly accepted and overcome.

Chaucer's superiority

If we ask ourselves wherein consists the immense superiority of Chaucer's poetry over the romance-poetry—why it is that in passing from this to Chaucer we suddenly feel ourselves to be in another world, we shall find that his superiority is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry. His superiority in substance is given by his large, free, simple, clear yet kindly view of human life,—so unlike

[1] The poetic romances of mediaeval France.—*Editor.*

the total want, in the romance-poets, of all intelligent command of it. Chaucer has not their helplessness; he has gained the power to survey the world from a central, a truly human point of view. We have only to call to mind the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. The right comment upon it is Dryden's: "It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that *here is God's plenty*." And again: "He is a perpetual fountain of good sense." It is by a large, free, sound representation of things, that poetry, this high criticism of life, has truth of substance; and Chaucer's poetry has truth of substance.

Chaucer's style

Of his style and manner, if we think first of the romance-poetry and then of Chaucer's divine liquidness of diction, his divine fluidity of movement, it is difficult to speak temperately. They are irresistible, and justify all the rapture with which his successors speak of his "gold dew-drops of speech." Johnson misses the point entirely when he finds fault with Dryden for ascribing to Chaucer the first refinement of our numbers, and says that Gower also can show smooth numbers and easy rhymes. The refinement of our numbers means something far more than this. A nation may have versifiers with smooth numbers and easy rhymes, and yet may have no real poetry at all. Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry; he is our "well of English undefiled," because of the lovely charm of his diction, the lovely charm of his movement, he makes an epoch and founds a tradition. In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, we can follow the tradition of the liquid diction, the fluid movement, of Chaucer; at one time it is his liquid diction of which in these poets we feel the virtue, and at another time it is his fluid movement. And the virtue is irresistible.

Bounded as in space, I must yet find room for an example of Chaucer's virtue, as I have given examples to show the virtue of the great classics. I feel disposed to say that a

single line is enough to show the charm of Chaucer's verse; that merely one line like this—

O martyr souded in virginitee!

has a virtue of manner and movement such as we shall not find in all the verse of romance-poetry;—but this is saying nothing. The virtue is such as we shall not find, perhaps, in all English poetry, outside the poets whom I have named as the special inheritors of Chaucer's tradition. A single line, however, is too little if we have not the strain of Chaucer's verse well in our memory; let us take a stanza. It is from *The Prioress' Tale,* the story of the Christian child murdered in a Jewry—

My throte is cut unto my nekke-bone
Saidé this child, and as by way of kinde
I should have dyed, yea longè time agone
But Jesu Christ, as ye in bookès finde,
Will that his glory last and be in minde,
And for the worship of his mother dere
Yet may I sing *O Alma* loud and clere.

Wordsworth has modernized this Tale, and to feel how delicate and evanescent is the charm of verse, we have only to read Wordsworth's first three lines of this stanza after Chaucer's—

My throat is cut unto the bone, I trow,
Said this young child, and by the law of kind
I should have died, yea, many hours ago.

The charm is departed. It is often said that the power of liquidness and fluidity in Chaucer's verse was dependent upon a free, a licentious dealing with language, such as is now impossible; upon a liberty, such as Burns too enjoyed, of making words like *neck, bird,* into a dissyllable by adding to them, and words like *cause, rhyme,* into a dissyllable by sounding the *e* mute. It is true that Chaucer's fluidity is conjoined with this liberty, and is admirably served by it; but we ought not to say that it was dependent upon it. It was dependent upon his talent. Other poets with a like liberty do not attain to the fluidity of Chaucer; Burns himself does not attain to it. Poets, again, who have a talent akin to Chaucer's, such as Shakespeare or Keats, have known how to attain to his fluidity without the like liberty.

[1]The French *soudé;* soldered, fixed fast.

And yet Chaucer is not one of the great classics. His poetry transcends and effaces, easily and without effort, all the romance-poetry of Catholic Christendom; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it, it transcends and effaces all the English poetry subsequent to it down to the age of Elizabeth. Of such avail is poetic truth of substance, in its natural and necessary union with poetic truth of style. And yet, I say, Chaucer is not one of the great classics. He has not their accent. What is wanting to him is suggested by the mere mention of the name of the first great classic of Christendom, the immortal poet who died eighty years before Chaucer,—Dante. The accent of such verse as

Chaucer not a great classic

In la sua voluntade è nostra pace . . .

is altogether beyond Chaucer's reach; we praise him, but we feel that this accent is out of the question for him. It may be said that it was necessarily out of the reach of any poet in the England of that stage of growth. Possibly; but we are to adopt a real, not a historic, estimate of poetry. However, we may account for its absence, something is wanting, then, to the poetry of Chaucer, which poetry must have before it can be placed in the glorious class of the best. And there is no doubt what that something is. It is the *spoudaiotes,* the high and excellent seriousness, which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry. The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it, Dante's has it, Shakespeare's has it. It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon; and with the increasing demands of our modern ages upon poetry, this virtue of giving us what we can rest upon will be more and more highly esteemed. A voice from the slums of Paris, fifty or sixty years after Chaucer, the voice of poor Villon out of his life of riot and crime, has at its happy moments (as, for instance, in the last stanza of *La Belle Heaulmière*) more of this important poetic virtue of seriousness than all the productions of Chaucer. But its ap-

Villon

parition in Villon,[1] and in men like Villon, is fitful; the greatness of the great poets, the power of their criticism of life, is that their virtue is sustained.

To our praise, therefore, of Chaucer as a poet there must be this limitation: he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics, and therewith an important part of their virtue. Still, the main fact for us to bear in mind about Chaucer is his sterling value according to that real estimate which we firmly adopt for all poets. He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite value of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

* * * *

III Burns

By his English poetry Burns in general belongs to the eighteenth century, and has little importance for us.

> Mark ruffian Violence, distain'd with crimes,
> Rousing elate in these degenerate times;
> View unsuspecting Innocence a prey,
> As guileful Fraud points out the erring way;
> While subtle Litigation's pliant tongue
> The life-blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong!

Evidently this is not the real Burns, or his name and fame would have disappeared long ago. Nor is Clarinda's love-poet, Sylvander, the real Burns either. But he tells us himself: "These English songs gravel me to death. I have not

[1]The name *Heaulmière* is said to be derived from a headdress (helm) worn as a mark by courtesans. In Villon's ballad, a poor old creature of this class laments her days of youth and beauty. The last stanza of the ballad runs thus—

> Ainsi le bon temps regretons
> Entre nous, pauvres vieilles sott
> Assises bas, à croppetons,
> Tout en ung tas comme pelottes;
> A petit feu de chenevottes
> Tost allumées, tost estainctes,
> Et jadis fusmes si mignottes!
> Ainsi en prend à maintz et maintes.

"Thus amongst ourselves we regret the good time, poor silly old things, low-seated on our heels, all in a heap like so many balls; by a little fire of hemp-stalks, soon lighted, soon spent. And once we were such darlings! So fares it with many and many a one."

the command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think that my ideas are more barren in English than in Scotch. I have been at *Duncan Gray* to dress it in English, but all I can do is desperately stupid." We English turn naturally, in Burns, to the poems in our own language, because we can read them easily; but in those poems we have not the real Burns.

The real Burns is of course in his Scotch poems. Let us boldly say that of much of this poetry, a poetry dealing perpetually with Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, a Scotchman's estimate is apt to be personal. A Scotchman is used to this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners; he has a tenderness for it; he meets its poet half way. In this tender mood he reads pieces like the *Holy Fair* or *Halloween*. But this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners is against a poet, not for him, when it is not a partial countryman who reads him; for in itself it is not a beautiful world, and no one can deny that it is of advantage to a poet to deal with a beautiful world. Burns' world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, is often a harsh, a sordid, a repulsive world; even the world of his *Cotter's Saturday Night* is not a beautiful world. No doubt a poet's criticism of life may have such truth and power that it triumphs over its world and delights us. Burns may triumph over his world, often he does triumph over his world, but let us observe how and where. Burns is the first case we have had where the bias of the personal estimate tends to mislead; let us look at him closely, he can bear it.

The real Burns

Many of his admirers will tell us that we have Burns, convivial, genuine, delightful, here—

> Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair
> Than either school or college;
> It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
> It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
> Be 't whisky gill or penny wheep
> Or ony stronger portion,
> It never fails, on drinking deep,
> To kittle up our notion
> By night or day.

There is a great deal of that sort of thing in Burns, and it is unsatisfactory, not because it is bacchanalian poetry, but because it has not that accent of sincerity which bacchanalian poetry, to do it justice, very often has. There is something in it of bravado, something which makes us feel that we have not the man speaking to us with his real voice; something, therefore, poetically unsound.

With still more confidence will his admirers tell us that we have the genuine Burns, the great poet, when his strain asserts the independence, equality, dignity, of men, as in the famous song *For a' that and a' that*

A prince can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that.

Here they find his grand, genuine touches; and still more, when this puissant genius, who so often set morality at defiance, falls moralizing—

The sacred lowe o' weel-placed love
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it.
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard o' concealing,
But och! it hardens a' within,
And pertrifies the feeling.

Or in a higher strain—

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us
He knows each chord, its various tone;
Each spring its various bias.
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.

Or in a better strain yet, a strain, his admirers will say, unsurpassable—

To make a happy fire-side clime
To weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

There is criticism of life for you, the admirers of Burns will say to us; there is the application of ideas to life! There is, undoubtedly. The doctrine of the last-quoted lines coincides almost exactly with what was the aim and end, Xenophon tells us, of all the teaching of Socrates. And the application is a powerful one; made by a man of vigorous understanding, and (need I say?) a master of language.

But for the supreme poetical success more is required than the powerful application of ideas to life; it must be an application under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Those laws fix as an essential condition, in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness;—the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity. The accent of high seriousness, born of absolute sincerity, is what gives to such verse as

Supreme poetry

In la sua volontade è nostra pace . . .

to such criticism of life as Dante's, its power. Is this accent felt in the passages which I have been quoting from Burns? Surely not; surely, if our sense is quick, we must perceive that we have not in those passages a voice from the very inmost soul of the genuine Burns; he is not speaking to us from these depths, he is more or less preaching. And the compensation for admiring such passages less, from missing the perfect poetic accent in them, will be that we shall admire more the poetry where that accent is found.

No; Burns, like Chaucer, comes short of the high seriousness of the great classics, and the virtue of matter and manner which goes with that high seriousness is wanting to his work. At moments he touched it in a profound and passionate melancholy, as in those four immortal lines taken by Byron as a motto for *The Bride of Abydos,* but which have in them a depth of poetic quality such as resides in no verse of Byron's own—

Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

But a whole poem of that quality Burns cannot make; the rest, in the *Farewell to Nancy,* is verbiage.

Burns's criticism of life is ironic

We arrive best at the real estimate of Burns, I think, by conceiving his work as having truth of matter and truth of manner, but not the accent or the poetic virtue of the highest masters. His genuine criticism of life, when the sheer poet in him speaks, is ironic; it is not—

> Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
> These woes of mine fulfil,
> Here firm I rest, they must be best
> Because they are Thy will!

It is far rather: *Whistle owre the lave o't!* Yet we may say of him as of Chaucer, that of life and the world, as they come before him, his view is large, free, shrewd, benignant, —truly poetic, therefore; and his manner of rendering what he sees is to match. But we must note, at the same time, his great difference from Chaucer. The freedom of Chaucer is heightened, in Burns, by a fiery, reckless energy; the benignity of Chaucer deepens, in Burns, into an overwhelming sense of the pathos of things;—of the pathos of human nature, the pathos, also, of nonhuman nature. Instead of the fluidity of Chaucer's manner, the manner of Burns has spring, bounding swiftness. Burns is by far the greater force, though he has perhaps less charm. The world of Chaucer is fairer, richer, more significant than that of Burns; but when the largeness and freedom of Burns get full sweep, as in *Tam o' Shanter,* or still more in that puissant and splendid production, *The Jolly Beggars,* his world may be what it will, his poetic genius triumphs over it. In the world of *The Jolly Beggars* there is more than hideousness and squalor, there is bestiality; yet the piece is a superb poetic success. It has a breadth, truth, and power which make the famous scene in Auerbach's Cellar, of Goethe's *Faust,* seem artificial and tame beside it, and which are only matched by Shakespeare and Aristophanes.

Here, where his largeness and freedom serve him so admirably, and also in those poems and songs where to shrewd-

ness he adds infinite archness and wit, and to benignity infinite pathos, where his manner is flawless, and a perfect poetic whole is the result,—in things like the address to the mouse whose home he had ruined, in things like *Duncan Gray, Tam Glen, Whistle and I'll come to you my Lad, Auld Lang Syne* (this list might be made much longer),—here we have the genuine Burns, of whom the real estimate must be high indeed. Not a classic, nor with the excellent *spoudaiotes* of the great classics, nor with a verse rising to a criticism of life and a virtue like theirs; but a poet with thorough truth of substance and an answering truth of style, giving us a poetry sound to the core. We all of us have a leaning towards the pathetic and may be inclined perhaps to prize Burns most for his touches of piercing, sometimes almost intolerable, pathos; for verse like—

> We twa hae paidl't i' the burn
> From mornin' sun till dine;
> But seas between us braid hae roar'd
> Sin auld lang syne . . .

where he is as lovely as he is sound. But perhaps it is by the perfection of soundness of his lighter and archer masterpieces that he is poetically most wholesome for us. For the votary misled by a personal estimate of Shelley, as so many of us have been, are, and will be,—of that beautiful spirit building his many-colored haze of words and images

> Pinnacled dim in the intense inane—

no contact can be wholesomer than the contact with Burns at his archest and soundest. Side by side with the

> On the brink of the night and the morning
> My coursers are wont to respire,
> But the Earth has just whispered a warning
> That their flight must be swifter than fire . . .

of *Prometheus Unbound,* how salutary, how very salutary, to place this from *Tam Glen*—

> My minnie does constantly deave me
> And bids me beware o' young men;
> They flatter, she says, to deceive me;
> But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen?

IV Wordsworth

Poetry a criticism of life

[1]Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

> On man, on nature, and on human life.—*The Recluse.*

which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own; and his superiority arises from his powerful use, in his best pieces, his powerful application to his subject, of ideas "on man, on nature, and on human life."

Moral ideas in poetry

Voltaire, with his signal acuteness, most truly remarked that "no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation." And he adds: "There, it seems to me, is the great merit of the English poets." Voltaire does not mean, by "treating in poetry moral ideas," the composing moral and didactic poems;—that brings us but a very little way in poetry. He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above "of the noble and profound application of ideas to life"; and he means the application of these ideas under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth. If it is said that to call these ideas *moral* ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation, I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, *how to live,* is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is, of course, to be given to the term *moral.* Whatever bears upon the question, "how to live," comes under it.

> Nor love thy life, nor hate; but, what thou liv'st,
> Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven.

[1]These passages are from the Preface to *The Poems of Wordsworth,* edited by Arnold and published in 1879.

In those fine lines Milton utters, as every one at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so, too, when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

> Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair—

he utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says, that

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep,

he utters a moral idea.

Voltaire was right in thinking that the energetic and profound treatment of moral ideas, in this large sense, is what distinguishes the English poetry. He sincerely meant praise, not dispraise or hint of limitation; and they err who suppose that poetic limitation is a necessary consequence of the fact, the fact being granted as Voltaire states it. If what distinguishes the greatest poets is their powerful and profound application of ideas to life, which surely no good critic will deny, then to prefix to the term ideas here the term moral makes hardly any difference, because human life itself is in so preponderating a degree moral.

It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life, —to the question: How to live. Morals are often treated in a narrow and false fashion; they are bound up with systems of thought and belief which have had their day; they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers; they grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them; in a poetry which might take for its motto Omar Kheyam's words: "Let us make up in the tavern for the time which we have wasted in the mosque." Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them; in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude ourselves in either case; and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhaustible

word *life,* until we learn to enter into its meaning. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life;* a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life.*

Stopping at an inn

Epictetus had a happy figure for things like the play of the senses, or literary form and finish, or argumentative ingenuity, in comparison with "the best and master thing" for us, as he called it, the concern, how to live. Some people were afraid of them, he said, or they disliked and undervalued them. Such people were wrong; they were unthankful or cowardly. But the things might also be over-prized, and treated as final when they are not. They bear to life the relation which inns bear to home. "As if a man, journeying home, and finding a nice inn on the road, and liking it, were to stay forever at the inn! Man, thou hast forgotten thine object; thy journey was not *to* this, but *through* this. 'But this inn is taking.' And how many other inns, too, are taking, and how many fields and meadows! but as places of passage merely. You have an object, which is this: to get home, to do your duty to your family, friends, and fellow-counutrymen, to attain inward freedom, serenity, happiness, contentment. Style takes your fancy, arguing takes your fancy, and you forget your home and want to make your abode with them and to stay with them, on the plea that they are taking. Who denies that they are taking? but as places, of passage, as inns. And when I say this, you suppose me to be attacking the care for style, the care for argument. I am not; I attack the resting in them, the not looking to the end which is beyond them."

Now, when we came across a poet like Théophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and never got farther. There may be inducements to this or that one of us, at this or that moment, to find delight in him, to cleave to him; but after all, we do not change the truth about him,—we only stay ourselves in his inn along with him. And when we come across a poet like Wordsworth, who sings

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope.
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
Of blessed consolations in distress,
Of moral strength and intellectual power,
Of joy in widest commonalty spread.
—*The Recluse.*

then we have a poet intent on "the best and master thing," and who prosecutes his journey home. We say, for brevity's sake, that he deals with *life,* because he deals with that in which life really consists. This is what Voltaire means to praise in the English poets,—this dealing with what is really life. But always it is the mark of the greatest poets that they deal with it; and to say that the English poets are remarkable for dealing with it, is only another way of saying, what is true, that in poetry the English genius has especially shown its power.

Wordsworth deals with it, and his greatness lies in his dealing with it so powerfully. I have named a number of celebrated poets above all of whom he, in my opinion, deserves to be placed. He is to be placed above poets like Voltaire, Dryden, Pope, Lessing, Schiller, because these famous personages, with a thousand gifts and merits, never, or scarcely ever, attain the distinctive accent and utterance of the high and genuine poets—

Quique pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti,

at all. Burns, Keats, Heine, not to speak of others in our list, have this accent;—who can doubt it? And at the same time they have treasures of humor, felicity, passion, for which in Wordsworth we shall look in vain. Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? It is here; he deals with more of *life* than they do; he deals with *life,* as a whole, more powerfully.

Wordsworth's philosophy

No Wordsworthian will doubt this. Nay, the fervent Wordsworthian will add, as Mr. Leslie Stephen does, that Wordsworth's poetry is precious because his philosophy is sound; that his "ethical system is as distinctive and capable of exposition as Bishop Butler's;" that his poetry is informed by ideas which "fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought." But we must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians, if we want to secure for

Wordsworth his due rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and to lay far too much stress upon what they call his philosophy. His poetry is the reality, his philosophy,—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of "a scientific system of thought," and the more that it puts them on,—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say: Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion. But in Wordsworth's case, at any rate, we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy.

The *Excursion* abounds with philosophy, and therefore the *Excursion* is to the Wordsworthian what it never can be to the disinterested lover of poetry,—a satisfactory work. "Duty exists," says Wordsworth, in the *Excursion;* and then he proceeds thus—

> . . . Immutably survive,
> For our support, the measures and the forms,
> Which an abstract Intelligence supplies,
> Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.

And the Wordsworthian is delighted, and thinks that here is a sweet union of philosophy and poetry. But the disinterested lover of poetry will feel that the lines carry us really not a step farther than the proposition which they would interpret; that they are a tissue of elevated but abstract verbiage, alien to the very nature of poetry.

Or let us come direct to the center of Wordsworth's philosophy, as "an ethical system, as distinctive and capable of systematical exposition as Bishop Butler's"—

> . . . One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists, one only;—an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good.

That is doctrine such as we hear in church, too, religious and philosophic doctrine; and the attached Wordsworthian loves passages of such doctrine, and brings them forward in proof of his poet's excellence. But however true the doctrine

may be, it has, as here presented, none of the characters of *poetic* truth, the kind of truth which we require from a poet, and in which Wordsworth is really strong.

Even the "intimation" of the famous Ode, those corner-stones of the supposed philosophic system of Wordsworth,—the idea of the high instincts and affections coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds,—this idea, of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself not the character of poetic truth of the best kind; it has no real solidity. The instinct of delight in Nature and her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in Wordsworth himself as a child. But to say that universally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful. In many people, perhaps with the majority of educated persons, the love of nature is nearly imperceptible at ten years old, but strong and operative at thirty. In general we may say of these high instincts of early childhood, the base of the alleged systematic philosophy of Wordsworth, what Thucydides says of the early achievements of the Greek race: "It is impossible to speak with certainty of what is so remote; but from all that we can really investigate, I should say that they were no very great things."

Finally, the "scientific system of thought" in Wordsworth gives us at least such poetry as this, which the devout Wordsworthian accepts—

> O for the coming of that glorious time
> When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
> And best protection, this Imperial Realm,
> While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
> An obligation, on her part, to *teach*
> Them who are born to serve her and obey;
> Binding herself by statute to secure,
> For all the children whom her soil maintains,
> The rudiments of letters, and inform
> The mind with moral and religious truth.
>
> —*The Excursion.*

Wordsworth calls Voltaire dull, and surely the production of these un-Voltairian lines must have been imposed on him as a judgment! One can hear them being quoted at a Social

Science Congress; one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial towns; dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight; benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

Why Wordsworth is great

"But turn we," as Wordsworth says, "from these bold, bad men," the haunters of Social Science Congresses. And let us be on our guard, too, against the exhibitors and extollers of a "scientific system of thought" in Wordsworth's poetry. The poetry will never be seen aright while they thus exhibit it. The cause of its greatness is simple, and may be told quite simply. Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.

The source of joy from which he thus draws is the truest and most unfailing source of joy accessible to man. It is also accessible universally. Wordsworth brings us word, therefore, according to his own strong and characteristic line, he brings us word

> Of joy in widest commonalty spread.

Here is an immense advantage for a poet. Wordsworth tells of what all seek, and tells of it at its truest and best source, and yet a source where all may go and draw for it.

Nevertheless, we are not to suppose that everything is precious which Wordsworth, standing even at this perennial and beautiful source, may give us. Wordsworthians are apt to talk as if it must be. They will speak with the same reverence of *The Sailor's Mother,* for example, as of *Lucy Gray.* They do their master harm by such lack of discrimination. *Lucy Gray* is a beautiful success; *The Sailor's Mother* is a failure. To give aright what he wishes to give, to interpret

and render successfully, is not always within Wordsworth's own command. It is within no poet's command; here is the part of the Muse, the inspiration, the God, the "not ourselves." In Wordsworth's case, the accident, for so it may almost be called, of inspiration, is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him; no poet, when it fails him, is so left "weak as is a breaking wave." I remember hearing him say that "Goethe's poetry was not inevitable enough." The remark is striking and true; no line in Goethe, as Goethe said himself, but its maker knew well how it came there. Wordsworth is right, Goethe's poetry is not inevitable; not inevitable enough. But Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him. He has no style. He was too conversant with Milton not to catch at times his master's manner, and he has fine Miltonic lines; but he has no assured poetic style of his own, like Milton. When he seeks to have a style he falls into ponderosity and pomposity. In the *Excursion* we have his style, as an artistic product of his own creation; and although Jeffrey completely failed to recognize Wordsworth's real greatness, he was yet not wrong in saying of the *Excursion,* as a work of poetic style: "This will never do." And yet magical as is that power, which Wordsworth has not, of assured and possessed poetic style, he has something which is an equivalent for it.

Style in poetry

Every one who has any sense for these things feels the subtle turn, the heightening, which is given to a poet's verse by his genius for style. We can feel it in the

> After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well—

of Shakespeare; in the

> . . . though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues—

of Milton. It is the incomparable charm of Milton's power of poetic style which gives such worth to *Paradise Regained,* and makes a great poem of a work in which Milton's imag-

ination does not soar high. Wordsworth has in constant possession, and at command, no style of this kind; but he had too poetic a nature, and had read the great poets too well, not to catch, as I have already remarked, something of it occasionally. We find it not only in his Miltonic lines; we find it in such a phrase as this, where the manner is his own not Milton's—

> the fierce confederate storm
> Of sorrow barricadoed evermore
> Within the walls of cities;

although even here, perhaps, the power of style which is undeniable, is more properly that of eloquent prose than the subtle heightening and change wrought by genuine poetic style. It is style, again, and the elevation given by style, which chiefly makes the effectiveness of *Laodameia.* Still the right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from *Michael*—

> And never lifted up a single stone.

There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style, strictly so called, at all; yet it is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind.

Wordsworth owed much to Burns, and a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters, Burns could show him.

> The poor inhabitant below
> Was quick to learn and wise to know,
> And keenly felt the friendly glow
> And softer flame;
> But thoughtless follies laid him low
> And stain'd his name.

Every one will be conscious of a likeness here to Wordsworth; and if Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner, we must remember, what indeed he himself would always have been forward to acknowledge, that Burns used it before him.

Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatchable. Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare,

sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes; from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of this subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of *Resolution and Independence;* but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.

Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique. His best poems are those which most perfectly exhibit this balance. I have a warm admiration for *Laodameia* and for the great *Ode;* but if I am to tell the very truth, I find *Laodameia* not wholly free from something declamatory. If I had to pick out poems of a kind most perfectly to show Wordsworth's unique power, I should rather choose poems such as *Michael, The Fountain, The Highland Reaper.* And poems with the peculiar and unique beauty which distinguishes these, Wordsworth produced in considerable number; besides very many other poems of which the worth, although not so rare as the worth of these, is still exceedingly high.

On the whole, then, as I said at the beginning, not only is Wordsworth eminent by reason of the goodness of his best work, but he is eminent also by reason of the great body of good work which he has left to us. With the ancients I will not compare him. In many respects the ancients are far above us, and yet there is something that we demand which they can never give. Leaving the ancients, let us come to the poets and poetry of Christendom, Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth. But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to find his superiors.

* * * *

ROBERT FROST

By AMY LOWELL

With the publication of "North of Boston" [1914], Mr. Frost's reputation was suddenly made. There was hardly a dissenting voice as to its merits. A paper usually so hostile to American verse as "The Times" wrote: "Poetry burns up out of it, as when a faint wind breathes upon smouldering embers." A beautiful and accurate characterization, for, through the homely, quiet words rises a faint pungency, the very aroma of poesy floating thinly up into the air.

New England made articulate

"North of Boston" is a "book of people," as Mr. Frost has said in his dedication. It is a volume of stories; long, interesting stories of those New Hampshire folk dwelling between the two poles of Mr. Frost's "few hundred miles." There is no whisper of English influence in this poetry, it is the very nostalgia of his New England hills. The speech is New England, except in one particular which I shall mention later, although the poet eschews dialect. His eyes may see the soft rounded English country, with its stiles and tufted trees, but the lines etched upon his heart are the articulate outlines of rock and hemlock, the angular sharpness of stone walls and white clapboarded houses against a hard blue sky.

A little poem in italics serves as motto to the volume, and may very well serve as motto to all Mr. Frost's work. For here in a few words is an upland pasture with the farmer

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Through the many poems collected in *Men, Women and Ghosts, Sword Blades and Poppy Seed, Can Grande's Castle* and other volumes, Miss Lowell is doubtless the most widely known practicer of the new manner in American poetry. In criticism she has published also *Six French Poets.* With Florence Ayscough, she has lately published *Fir-Flower Tablets,* a collection of ancient Chinese poetry in English form. On her Imagist side Miss Lowell has been influenced by the Japanese idylls known as *tanka* and *hokku.* Vividness and variety characterize her work throughout.

at work in it, and here is that tenderness, that love of place and people which marks all that this poet does:

THE PASTURE

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I sha'nt' be gone long.—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too.

"North of Boston" is a very sad book. All the sadder, perhaps, because the poet is at no pains to make it so. He is holding no brief for or against the state of things he portrays, he is too much a part of it himself to exhibit it as an illustration of anything. He writes of it because it is his, his to love and present. Yet, in spite of its author's sympathetic touch, the book reveals a disease which is eating into the vitals of our New England life, at least in its rural communities.

The dwindling of New England

What is there in the hard, vigorous climate of these states which plants the seeds of degeneration? Is the violence and ugliness of their religious belief the cause of these twisted and tortured lives? Have the sane, full-blooded men all been drafted away to the cities, or the West, leaving behind only feeble remainders of a once fine stock? The question again demands an answer after the reading of Mr. Frost's book.

Other countries can rear a sturdy peasantry which maintains itself for generations, heavy and slow, perhaps, but strong and self-replenishing; and this for a length of time beside which our New England civilization is as nothing. We are often told that the telephone has done much to decrease insanity in the farming districts, and doubtless it is true. New England Winters are long and isolating. But what about Russian Winters, Polish, Swedish, Norwegian? After all, the telephone is a very modern invention, and these countries have been producing a hardy peasantry for hundreds of years. It is said that the country people of these nations are less highly

organized, less well educated, than are New Englanders, and so better able to stand the loneliness of long Winters. But this does not explain the great numbers of people, sprung from old New England stock, but not themselves living in remote country places, who go insane.

Poetic realism

It is a question for the psychiatrist to answer, and it would be interesting to ask it with "North of Boston" as a text-book to go by. Mr. Frost has reproduced both people and scenery with a vividness which is extraordinary. Here are the huge hills, undraped by any sympathetic legend, felt as things hard and unyielding, almost sinister, not exactly feared, but regarded as in some sort influences nevertheless. Here are great stretches of blueberry pasture lying in the sun; and again, Autumn orchards cracking with fruit which it is almost too much trouble to gather. Heavy thunder-storms drench the lonely roads and spatter on the walls of farmhouses rotting in abandonment; and the modern New England town, with narrow frame houses, visited by drummers alone, is painted in all its ugliness. For Mr. Frost's is not the kindly New England of Whittier, nor the humorous and sensible one of Lowell; it is a latter-day New England, where a civilization is decaying to give place to another and very different one.

Mr. Frost does not deal with the changed population, with the Canadians and Finns who are taking up the deserted farms. His people are left-overs of the old stock, morbid, pursued by phantoms, slowly sinking to insanity. In "The Black Cottage," we have the pathos of the abandoned house, after the death of the stern, narrow-minded woman who had lived in it. In "A Servant to Servants," we have a woman already insane once and drifting there again, with the consciousness that her drab, monotonous life is bringing it upon her. "Home Burial" gives the morbidness of death in these remote places—a woman unable to take up her life again after her only child has died. The charming idyll, "After Apple-picking," is dusted over with something uncanny, and "The Fear" is a horrible revelation of those undercurrents which go on as much in the country as in the city, and with anxiety eating

away whatever satisfaction the following of desire might have brought. There is very much the same theme in "The Housekeeper," while "The Generations of Men" shows that foolish pride in a useless race which is so strange a characteristic of these people. It is all here—the book is an epitome of a decaying New England.

Mr. Frost writes almost as a man under a spell. As though he were the mouthpiece of something beyond himself, only conscious of the necessity of stating what is in him. There is throughout the entire book an undercurrent of his own lines:

The poet enspelled

. . . . . I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.

Still he must gather it; it is what he is here to do. The whole of the poem from which that quotation is taken, "After Apple-picking," is mystical with this sense of an unsought burden imposed.

AFTER APPLE-PICKING

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,

Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

Is it not true that he cannot tell "what form his dreaming is about to take"? I have said that Mr. Frost is an intuitive poet. This poem shows his sense of intuition becoming almost conscious.

The poet's quality

Truly the mysticism in "After Apple-picking" "burns up out of the poem," for, on the surface, it is one of the most beautifully clear that Mr. Frost has done. The two-pointed ladder sticking through the trees is exceedingly clean and bright as a picture, indeed the whole of the description is excellent. Here, too, we have those touches so simple, so true, so original, which give Mr. Frost's work such a rare distinction. For instance:

My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.

Such passages are scattered through all the poems in "North of Boston." Sometimes they are purely beautiful, as in this, from "The Death of the Hired Man":

"I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon."
It hit the moon.
Then there were three there, making a dim row,
The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.

Sometimes they are beautiful because of their absolute fidelity to fact, as in the lines about the ladder I have just quoted, or these from "The Woodpile":

It was a cord of maple, cut and split
And piled—and measured, four by four by eight.
And not another like it could I see.
No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it.
And it was older sure than this year's cutting,
Or even last year's or the year's before.
The wood was grey and the bark warping off it
And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.

"North of Boston" is a book of stories in verse. And Mr. Frost's genius shows itself not only in the verse, but in the stories as such. In verse or in prose, they would be unusual. They are so natural, so obvious, that, in reading them, one says, "I wonder why I never thought of making a story like that?" But, in spite of the numbers of stories on New England life, nobody has thought of making such stories before. In some cases, the theme is exceedingly slight, yet the characters are so sharply drawn that they hold the reader's interest in spite of the extreme vagueness of the plot. Is it that, or is it that Mr. Frost possesses the gift of style, as the English critic, Mr. Edward Garnett, has pointed out? For, in the final count, it is always this fact of style which makes the glory of a work of art and keeps it alive. Works of art live or die by the manner of their telling rather than by their content, however strange such an idea may be to the contemporary reader. Times change, and what appears significant to one generation is insignificant to another, but beauty of expression remains and is immortal.

Stories in verse

The story of "The Death of the Hired Man" is very simple and very slight. A poor, half-crazed old labourer comes back to the farm where he has occasionally worked. The farmer's wife is in the house, she permits the man to come into the kitchen and rest. Then she goes out to meet her returning husband and beg him to be kind to the old man, and give him something to do, and while her husband goes in to speak to him, she sits on the doorstep and watches the little cloud sailing toward the moon. But, as written by Mr. Frost, this story is

[1]"On opening *North of Boston,*" wrote Mr. Edward Garnett, "we see the first lines to be stamped with the magic of *style,* of a style that obeys its own laws of grace and beauty and inner harmony. Note the clarity of the images [he has quoted from "Mending Wall"], the firm outline. How delicately the unobtrusive opening suggests the countryman's contemplative pleasure in his fields and woods. It seems so very quiet, the modern reader may complain, forgetting Wordsworth; and indeed, had Wordsworth written these lines, I think they must have stood in every English anthology."—*Editor.*

full of tenderness, and the foreboding of a silent close. It begins:

> Mary sat musing on the lamp-flame at the table
> Waiting for Warren. When she heard his step,
> She ran on tip-toe down the darkened passage
> To meet him in the doorway with the news
> And put him on his guard. "Silas is back."
> She pushed him outward with her through the door
> And shut it after her. "Be kind," she said.
> She took the market things from Warren's arms
> And set them on the porch, then drew him down
> To sit beside her on the wooden steps.

They talk, the wife persuading, the husband a trifle unwilling. At length,

> Part of a moon was falling down the west,
> Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
> Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw
> And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand
> Among the harp-like morning-glory strings,
> Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,
> As if she played unheard the tenderness
> That wrought on him beside her in the night.
> "Warren," she said, "he has come home to die:
> You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time."
> "Home," he mocked gently.
> "Yes, what else but home?
> It all depends on what you mean by home.
> Of course he's nothing to us, any more
> Than was the hound that came a stranger to us
> Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail.
> Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
> They have to take you in."
> "I should have called it
> Something you somehow haven't to deserve."
> Warren leaned out and took a step or two,
> Picked up a little stick, and brought it back
> And broke it in his hand and tossed it by.
> "Silas has better claim on us you think
> Than on his brother? Thirteen little miles
> As the road winds would bring him to his door.
> Silas has walked that far no doubt to-day.
> Why didn't he go there? His brother's rich,
> A somebody—director in the bank."

Finally, her husband (Warren) goes into the house, and she is left musing on the moon and the cloud until

> Warren returned—too soon, it seemed to her,
> Slipped to her side, caught up her hand and waited.
> "Warren," she questioned.
> "Dead," was all he answered.

That is all, and yet, somehow, it is an adequate and profoundly moving story.

"The Mountain" is an eery bit of *genre* painting. The mountain, huge, dominating, remote in its austerity, is the poem:

> The mountain held the town as in a shadow
> I saw so much before I slept there once;
> I noticed that I missed stars in the west,
> Where its black body cut into the sky.
> Near me it seemed: I felt it like a wall
> Behind which I was sheltered from a wind.
> And yet between the town and it I found,
> When I walked forth at dawn to see new things,
> Were fields, a river, and beyond, more fields.
> The river at the time was fallen away,
> And made a widespread brawl on cobble-stones;
> But the signs showed what it had done in spring;
> Good grass-land gullied out, and in the grass
> Ridges of sand, and driftwood stripped of bark.
> I crossed the river and swung round the mountain.

Then comes the countryman, driving an ox-team, who has "heard tell" of a brook "on the top, tip-top" which is

> ". . . . always cold in summer, warm in winter.
> One of the great sights going is to see
> It steam in winter like an ox's breath,
> Until the bushes all along its banks
> Are inch-deep with the frosty spines and bristles—
> You know the kind."

But "I never saw it." All his life he has lived at its base, but never cared to see what was above:

> ". . . . I've always meant to go
> And look myself, but you know how it is:
> It doesn't seem so much to climb a mountain
> You've worked around the foot of all your life.
> What would I do? Go in my overalls,
> With a big stick, the same as when the cows
> Haven't come down to the bars at milking time?
> Or with a shotgun for a stray black bear?
> 'Twouldn't seem real to climb for climbing it."

Then:

> He drew the oxen toward him with light touches
> Of his slim goad on nose and offside flank,
> Gave them their marching orders and was moving.

It is an amazing thing, because it is nothing and yet everything—the whole terrible inertia which has settled upon these poeple dwelling among the unyielding hills.

The most remarkable stories in the book are "Home Burial," "A Servant to Servants," and "The Fear," and they are also the most terrible. They are the ones which most reveal disease, the disease which starts with a sort of coma of the brain, as in the countryman of "The Mountain," and ends with complete insanity.

"Home Burial" is a ghastly indictment of the small family, only too common, alas! throughout New England. The child dies, and the loneliness, the emptiness, the horror, unsettle the mother's mind. The father has at least the healthiness of work amid the constantly changing seasons to sustain him, but the mother has only her dull round of household tasks.

HOME BURIAL

He saw her from the bottom of the stairs
Before she saw him. She was starting down,
Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.
She took a doubtful step and then undid it
To raise herself and look again. He spoke
Advancing toward her: "What is it you see
From up there always—for I want to know."
She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,
And her face changed from terrified to dull.
He said to gain time: "What is it you see,"
Mounting until she cowered under him.
"I will find out now—you must tell me, dear."

But the wife will not tell him:

She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,
Blind creature; and a while he didn't see.

. . . . . .

But at last he murmured, "Oh," and again, "Oh."

What he saw was his child's grave. He goes on:

"The wonder is I didn't see it at once.
I never noticed it from here before.
I must be wonted to it—that's the reason.

. . . . . .

There are three stones of slate and one of marble,
Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight
On the sidehill. We haven't to mind *those*.
But I understand; it is not the stones,
But the child's mound—"

"Don't, don't, don't, don't," she cried.

That cry of the woman is terrible in its stark truth. It hurts the reader, it is as unbearable as the real cry would have been, one wants to stop one's ears and shut it out. Printed

words can go no farther than this. She says only one word, and it is not the mere repetition which gives it its tragic force, it is the context, the way in which the passage is worked up to this devastating cry. Afterwards:

> She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm
> That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;
> And turned on him with such a daunting look,
> He said twice over before he knew himself:
> "Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?"

Then she bursts out:

> "Not you! Oh, where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!
> I must get out of here. I must get air.
> I don't know rightly whether any man can."

He talks to her, tries to soothe her, but everything he says chafes the rawness of her grief:

> "Don't—don't go.
> Don't carry it to someone else this time.
> Tell me about it if it's something human.
> Let me into your grief. I'm not so much
> Unlike other folks as your standing there
> Apart would make me out. Give me my chance.
> I do think, though, you overdo it a little.
> What was it brought you up to think it the thing
> To take your mother-loss of a first child
> So inconsolably—in the face of love.
> You'd think his memory might be satisfied—"
> "There you go sneering now!"
> "I'm not, I'm not!
> You make me angry. I'll come down to you.
> God, what a woman! And it's come to this,
> A man can't speak of his own child that's dead."

But she has lost all sense of values; she sees only with the blurred vision of the partially unbalanced:

> "You can't because you don't know how.
> If you had any feelings, you that dug
> With you own hand—how could you?—his little grave;
> I saw you from that very window there,
> Making the gravel leap and leap in air,
> Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly
> And roll back down the mound beside the hole.
> I thought, Who is that man? I didn't know you.
> And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs
> To look again, and still your spade kept lifting.
> Then you came in. I heard your rumbling voice
> Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,
> But I went near to see with my own eyes.
> You could sit there with the stains on your shoes

> Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave
> And talk about your everyday concerns.
> You had stood the spade up against the wall
> Outside there in the entry, for I saw it."

He has no idea how to cope with with her unreason:

> "I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed.
> I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I'm cursed."

The woman does not spare him. She talks on and on in a torrent of words:

> "I can repeat the very words you were saying.
> 'Three foggy mornings and one rainy day
> Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.'
> Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
> What had how long it takes a birch to rot
> To do with what was in the darkened parlour."

He holds himself in. Gently he urges her:

> "There, you have said it all and you feel better.
> You won't go now. You're crying. Close the door.
> The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up.
> Amy! There's someone coming down the road!"

But he is dealing with a force he does not understand—the insidious, creeping force of mental disease. He cannot stop her, reason is powerless:

> . . . She was opening the door wider.
> "Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.
> I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will*!—"

Catholic countries, with their insistence upon consecrated ground in which to lay the dead, give no chance for horror like this. In England, a state church makes such a situation practically impossible. Happily it is unusual, even in New England, but what a travesty of happiness our vaunted freedom has led us into! The old pioneers came here to be free, strong, God-fearing, and upright; and, behold, they are decayed and demoralized. They flaunted Nature, and she has had her revenge.

"Home Burial" shows monotony and a mistaken attitude toward life bringing on insanity. In "The Fear," moral degeneration is leading to the same end. A woman, who has left her husband to live with another man, thinks she sees something in the bushes as she and he are driving home one night:

"I saw it just as plain as a white plate,"
She said, "as the light on the dashboard ran
Along the bushes at the roadside—a man's face.
You *must* have see it too."
"I didn't see it.
Are you sure—"
"Yes, I'm sure!"
"—it was a face?"
"Joel, I'll have to look. I can't go in,
I can't, and leave a thing like that unsettled."

She takes the lantern and goes down the road, refusing to let Joel go with her. There she comes face to face with her first husband:

She stood her ground against the noisy steps
That came on, but her body rocked a little.
"You see," the voice said.
"Oh." She looked and looked.
"You don't see—I've a child here by the hand."
"What's a child doing at this time of night—?"
"Out walking. Every child should have the memory
Of at least one long-after-bedtime walk.
What, son?"
"Then I should think you'd try to find
Somewhere to walk—"
"The highway as it happens—
We're stopping for the fortnight down at Dean's."
"But if that's all—Joel—you realize—
You won't think anything. You understand?
You understand that we have to be careful.
This is a very, very lonely place.
Joel!" She spoke as if she couldn't turn.
The swinging lantern lengthened to the ground,
It touched, it struck it, clattered and went out.

Does he kill her, or does she merely think that he is going to do so? Which one is crazed, he or she? Either way, Nature has taken her toll.

The most powerful of all these stories, and one of the truest, is "A Servant to Servants." A farmer's wife is talking to a camper:

"I didn't make you know how glad I was
To have you come and camp here on our land.
I promised myself to get down some day
And see the way you lived, but I don't know!
With a houseful of hungry men to feed
I guess you'd find. . . . It seems to me
I can't express my feelings any more
Than I can raise my voice or want to lift
My hand (oh, I can lift it when I have to).
Did ever you feel so? I hope you never.

It's got so I don't even know for sure
Whether I *am* glad, sorry, or anything.
There's nothing but a voice-like left inside
That seems to tell me how I ought to feel,
And would feel if I wasn't all gone wrong.
You take the lake. I look and look at it.
I see it's a fair, pretty sheet of water.
I stand and make myself repeat out loud
The advantages it has, so long and narrow,
Like a deep piece of some old running river
Cut short off at both ends. It lies five miles
Straight away through the mountain notch
From the sink window where I wash the plates,
And all our storms come up toward the house,
Drawing the slow waves whiter and whiter and whiter.
It took my mind off doughnuts and soda biscuit
To step outdoors and take the water dazzle
A sunny morning."

She has been insane once, and feels it coming on her again:

"It's rest I want—there, I have said it out—
From cooking meals for hungry hired men
And washing dishes after them—from doing
Things over and over that just won't stay done."

She tells a dreadful story of her father's mad brother kept in a cage in a barn-loft, shouting obscene words all night long:

"He'd pull his bars apart like bow and bow-string,
And let them go and make them twang until
His hands had worn them smooth as any ox-bow."

Then, wearily, after the story is told, with all its undercurrent of bearing on herself:

"Bless you, of course you're keeping me from work,
But the thing of it is, I need to *be* kept.
There's work enough to do—there's always that;
But behind's behind. The worst that you can do
Is set me back a little more behind.
I shan't catch up in this world, anyway.
I'd *rather* you'd not go unless you must."

Alas, if "Home Burial" is unusual, even in New England, overworked women are not. And the madman kept in the barn was a miserably common fact a generation ago.

These are stark stories, but they are not all so terrible as the three we have been considering.

I believe Mr. Frost intends "A Hundred Collars" to be humorous; I find it nothing except a little dull. Doubtless the timid doctor, the hotel clerk, and the tipsy, provincial reporter, with collars, size eighteen, are well drawn. So is the ugly town:

Characteristic humor of New England lacking?

. . . a place of shrieks and wandering lamps
And cars that shock and rattle—and *one* hotel.

The poem is a laborious attempt at humour. Mr. Frost is a kindly and genial poet, but he is never either whimsical or quaint. For this reason I find his people untrue to type in one important particular. In none of them do we find that pungency of thought or expression which is so ingrained in the New England temper. Characters and situations impress him, speech does not. It is probably for this reason that he uses no dialect in these poems. New England turns of speech would lose much of their raciness without the peculiar pronunciation which accompanies them.

Mr. Frost gives us no such delicious bits of humour as James Russell Lowell's:

We're curus critters: Now ain't jes' the minute
That ever fits us easy while we're in it.

or Alice Brown's: "I tried to do all I could for them that was in need. But I never lived my life with 'em, even when I was tendin' upon 'em and gettin' kind of achey trottin' up an' down stairs."

The speech of New England

Speech like that is of the essence of New England. Picturesque words, quaintly turned to half conceal, half reveal, a solemn truth. For the New Englander's comedy borders upon tragedy; and his tragedy is expressed with a whimsicality from which the tears are never far away. Vivid, paradoxical, constantly interesting, such is New England talk, and yet Mr. Frost has ignored it absolutely. He feels the people, but he has no ear for their peculiar tongue.[1]

[1]The poet-critic, Mr. Conrad Aiken, in his *Scepticisms* (p. 66), remarks: ". . . Mr. Masters and Mr. Frost, without so much as a preliminary blast of the trumpet, suddenly incorporated into their poetry a new world—the world of the individual consciousness in its complex entirety. At the moment, this was a new conception of the nature of poetry. A poem was not to be a single jewel of colorful phrases, but the jewel in its matrix. Of such poetry, it is readily seen, the appeal would be not merely aesthetic, but intellectual and emotional also—in the richest sense, human."

And Mr. Aiken, writing on "Amy Lowell as Critic," sees in her study of Mr. Frost "on the critic's part, a temperamental failure in rapprochement." "Of Mr. Frost's preoccupation with the attempt to write verse which shall have the simplicity of conversational speech and its modula-

It speaks marvellously for the vividness of the poet's work in other ways that it is still personal and particular with this element of local speech left out. What would J. M. Synge's plays be without the Irish idiom he employs? But in this matter, Synge's was the easier task, for Irish can be written acceptably without changing ordinary spelling, and Yankee dialect cannot. It is commonly said that an author adds many decades to his literary life, and widens his appeal at the time of writing, if he does not use dialect. I would amend that dictum by suggesting that it depends upon the author. Scott's novels are very little read, it is true, but that is less because so many of them are in dialect, as that they are all so largely mere fustian, a sort of material which is apt to become moth-eaten with time. Burns' dialect poems, on the other hand, are still much read and cherished. As it is, Mr. Frost has succeeded admirably in portraying the New England that he sees. What he does not portray is simply what he does not see.

Backgrounds

He sees much, however, both into the hearts of persons, and into the qualities of scenes. How deftly he draws a background. Take this picture:

> We chanced in passing by that afternoon
> To catch it in a sort of mental picture
> Among tar-banded ancient cherry trees,
> Set well back from the road in rank lodged grass,
> The little cottage we are speaking of.
> A front with just a door between two windows,
> Fresh painted by the shower a velvet-black.

or this, of blueberries:

> It must be on charcoal they fatten their fruit,
> I taste in them sometimes the flavour of soot.
> And after all really they're ebony skinned:
> The blue's but a mist from the breath of the wind.
> A tarnish that goes at a touch of the hand,
> And less than the tan with which pickers are tanned.

"The Fear" begins with these lines, and we get not only the picture, but the accompanying noises:

tions she says nothing; instead she exclaims at his failure to employ dialect in his New England poems—a failure for which we can wisely be grateful." (p. 256).—*Editor.*

A lantern light from deeper in the barn
Shone on a man and woman in the door
And threw their lurching shadows on a house
Near by, all dark in every glossy window.
A horse's hoofs pawed once the hollow floor,
And the back of the gig they stood beside
Moved in a little.

The creak and shift of the wheels is quite plain, although it is not indicated.

The form fits the matter

The secret of Mr. Frost's success in such passages as these, lies in his accurate observation, coupled with a perfect simplicity of phrase; the latter, an inheritance from a race brought up on the English Bible. He tells what he has seen *exactly* as he has seen it. He is never seduced into subtleties of expression which would be painfully out of place. His words are simple, straightforward, direct, manly, and there is an elemental quality in all he does which would surely be lost if he chose to pursue niceties of expression. For Mr. Frost has chosen his medium with an unerring sense of fitness. As there is no strange and expressive imaginative force playing over his subjects, so there is no exotic music pulsing through his verse,

The poems are written for the most part in blank verse, a blank verse which does not hesitate to leave out a syllable or put one in, whenever it feels like it. To the classicist, such liberties would be unendurable. But the method has its advantages. It suggests the hardness and roughness of New England granite. It is halting and maimed like the life it portrays, unyielding in substance, and broken in effect.

* * * *

The small canvas

In looking back over the three volumes which make up Mr. Frost's poetical output at present, we ask ourselves, what place does he hold among his contemporaries? I should say that he has gained a success in his chosen field which can be equalled by no other poet in our series. But his canvas is exceedingly small, and no matter how wonderfully he paints upon it, he cannot attain to the position held by men with a wider range of vision. As Jane Austen is perfect in her way, still we cannot rank her with

Shakespeare; nor can Theocritus ever be considered as great as Homer. Mr. Frost's work is undoubtedly more finished in its kind than the work of any other living American poet, but this very finish precludes growth. In some other poets we feel potentialities, in Mr. Frost we find achievement.

Realism

Mr. Robinson represents realism; with a much broader imagination than Mr. Frost, this force is nevertheless held in check by an innate pessimism which makes the real seem important and the visions of imagination almost frivolous. Mr. Frost is realism touched to fire by idealization, but in the final count, and in spite of its great beauty, it remains realism. We have no such rare imaginative bursts from him as Mr. Masefield gives us time and again in "The Dauber"; for instance, the description of the flying fishes.

Mr. Frost's quality and rank

Mr. Frost writes down *exactly* what he sees. But, being a true poet, he sees it vividly and with a charm which translates itself into a beautiful simplicity of expression. He is an eminently sympathetic poet. He wins first by his gentle understanding, and his strong and unsentimental power of emotion; later, we are conquered by his force, and moved to admiration by his almost unapproachable technique. Still, his imagination is bounded by his life, he is confined within the limits of his experience (or at least what might have been his experience) and bent all one way like the wind-blown trees of New England hillsides. After all, art is rooted in the soil, and only the very greatest men can be both cosmopolitan and great. Mr. Frost is as New England as Burns is Scotch, Synge Irish, or Mistral Provençal, and it is perhaps not too much to say that he is the equal of these poets, and will so rank to future generations.

NOVEMBER HOST: A Footnote

By THE EDITOR

At April doors, all welcoming is still the spring's, and a guest admitted to an apathetic host can keep his own heart warm. In midsummer, if any house be shut against us, all the kind earth's gates remain open to our better entertainment. But in autumn, in November, we do not like to feel that any human door stands locked, or even to see one swing grudgingly and stop at the narrowness of a peering face. A visitor then to the stone cottage in Vermont will find Robert Frost's door latched against idle winds, but opening to sense and candor with these and something more. The poet's door is not grudging, his hand not withheld, nor merely an embered blue in the fire his eyes keep. The mood will be of outdoor plenitude and hearthside friendliness. The talk will be homely, but in the dusk of it will be felt a breathing from high solitudes of truth that seem to slope equally into earth and under stars. The poet is a right November host, and whatever place he dwells in is a "mountain interval."

Sincerity and originality characterize Robert Frost as man and artist, and these have won him the praise of discriminating critics and the affection of uncritical readers. Yet in him, as in every personality of depth, there flows an elusive understream that asks divination of some witch-hazel wand. One falls thinking, "Out of the strong came forth sweetness," and wonders why the story and drama in his poems are the things mainly talked about, though everyone knows we should look first in lyrics for the lyrist. Not that all Frost's lyrics are either intended or unintended self-portraits. The artist as such must have the histrionic power of entering into imagined or externally actual situations and personalities to the degree of being moved by them—deeper into himself sometimes, but also sometimes out of himself—and he will report that which has moved him. But even his impersonations and interpretations will somehow declare the artist himself, while often he

comes frankly without mask or 'Let's pretend," and if then we cannot take him fully he and we must be sorry.

It is not wholly absurd to prophesy that in some remote, more human day, after all men have long "builded better than they knew," every man will be his own poet. And then a very simple recipe will be chiefly followed: see vividly something in the external world of nature or of human life; be excited (but never, excite yourself!) over it; render it to the rhythms of the heart; and with this solid thing beneath the feet either rise in a closing lark-flight of personal passion or with all power in leash speak the brief creative words that turn grey phantoms into ruddy denizens of the household. This recipe is a secret opened with every book of poems: read it variously in Burns's "To a Mouse" and in Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper," in Emerson's "Days" and Browning's "Two in the Campagna," in Arnold's "Dover Beach" and Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."

The formula may be traced too in "The Tuft of Flowers" by Robert Frost:

> I went to turn the grass once after one
> Who mowed it in the dew before the sun.
>
> The dew was gone that made his blade so keen
> Before I came to view the levelled scene.
>
> I looked for him behind an isle of trees;
> I listened for his whetstone on the breeze.
>
> But he had gone his way, the grass all mown,
> And I must be, as he had been,—alone,
>
> "As all must be," I said within my heart,
> "Whether they work together or apart."
>
> But as I said it, swift there passed me by
> On noiseless wing a 'wildered butterfly,
>
> Seeking with memories grown dim o'er night
> Some resting flower of yesterday's delight.
>
> And once I marked his flight go round and round,
> As where some flower lay withering on the ground.
>
> And then he flew as far as eye could see,
> And then on tremulous wing came back to me.

I thought of questions that have no reply,
And would have turned to toss the grass to dry;

But he turned first, and led my eye to look
At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook.

A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared
Beside a reedy brook the scythe had bared.

I left my place to know them by their name,
Finding them butterfly weed when I came.

The mower in the dew had loved them thus,
By leaving them to flourish, not for us,

Nor yet to draw one thought of ours to him,
But from sheer morning gladness at the brim.

The butterfly and I had lit upon,
Nevertheless, a message from the dawn,

That made me hear the wakening birds around,
And hear his long scythe whispering to the ground,

And feel a spirit kindred to my own;
So that henceforth I worked no more alone;

But glad with him, I worked as with his aid,
And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;

And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech
With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach.

"Men work together," I told him from the heart,
"Whether they work together or apart."[1]

This is universal art, and good art also in the Tolstoian sense because revealing "joy in widest commonalty spread."

The same tone, though not in so high a strain, rings through "The Road Not Taken." The last stanza runs:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

World-true, but less true for this poet than for many others. He is not one who could complain: "Oh last regret, regret can die!" A heartening example of the "sanity of art," Frost stands oaklike in the present and shrinks from no tomorrow, though he may ask October to delay "For the grapes' sake

[1]From *A Boy's Will*, Henry Holt & Co., 1915.

along the wall," and welcome the "Thawing Wind" to

> Scatter poems on the floor;
> Turn the poet out of door.

His New England world, too, is so solid that, once in, you must more than stir your stumps to get out. The mended walls cannot be willed away; the upland pastures lure to vagrancy with bird and flower; the roads wind farther in, and neighbors, hoe-blades up or reins down, must stop to talk. Then there are the grey houses, too wonted to toil and tragedy, yet dear with love.

Of all such things the poet gossips humanly, or he becomes their sober chronicler, and only rarely sings. "Flower-Gathering" is pure song, beginning thus:

> I left you in the morning,
> And in the morning glow,
> You walked a way beside me
> To make me sad to go.
> Do you know me in the gloaming,
> Gaunt and dusty grey with roaming?
> Are you dumb because you know me not,
> Or dumb because you know?

Personal and playful, but could any questioning probe more deeply into the heart of love—or God?

Something in "Flower-Gathering" recalls the wistful intimacy of "In the Home Stretch," a poem that should not be passed over because it seems but a too realistic picture of moving-day. Here it is an old farmhouse that is moved into, which is to be made—or not?—into an old home. Savor the realism first:

> Again
> The house was full of tramping, and the dark
> Door-filling men burst in and seized the stove.
> A cannon-mouth-like hole was in the wall,
> To which they set it true by eye; and then
> Came up the jointed stovepipe in their hands,
> So much too light and airy for their strength
> It almost seemed to come ballooning up,
> Slipping from clumsy clutches toward the ceiling.
> "A fit!" said one, and banged a stovepipe shoulder.
> "It's good luck when you move in to begin
> With good luck with your stovepipe. Never mind,
> It's not so bad in the country, settled down,
> When people 're getting on in life. You'll like it."

The men go, and with the Two left alone we come to the heart of the story. She says:

> "Dumped down in paradise we are and happy."

He answers:

> "It's all so much what I have always wanted,
> I can't believe it's what you wanted, too."
> "Shouldn't you like to know?"
> "I'd like to know
> If it is what you wanted, then how much
> You wanted it for me."

Can either know until the years shall answer? The poem ends:

> When there was no more lantern in the kitchen,
> The fire got out through crannies in the stove
> And danced in yellow wrigglers on the ceiling,
> As much at home as if they'd always danced there.[1]

The poet puts in our hand the key to "My November Guest" in the explicit words, "He is in love with being misunderstood," but the poem itself helps us to understand the uses of what seems adversity:

> My sorrow, when she's here with me,
> Thinks these dark days of autumn rain
> Are beautiful as days can be;
> She loves the bare, the withered tree;
> She walks the sodden pasture lane.
>
> Her pleasure will not let me stay.
> She talks and I am fain to list:
> She's glad the birds are gone away,
> She's glad her simple worsted grey
> Is silver now with clinging mist.
>
> The desolate, deserted trees,
> The faded earth, the heavy sky,
> The beauties she so truly sees,
> She thinks I have no eye for these,
> And vexes me for reason why.
>
> Not yesterday I learned to know
> The love of bare November days
> Before the coming of the snow,
> But it were vain to tell her so,
> And they are better for her praise.[2]

[1]From *Mountain Interval,* Henry Holt & Co., 1921.
[2]From *A Boy's Will,* 1915.

One more poem, "Revelation," and we shall know our November host:

We make ourselves a place apart
  Behind light words that tease and flout,
But oh, the agitated heart
  Till someone find us really out.

'Tis pity if the case require
  (Or so we say) that in the end
We speak the literal to inspire
  The understanding of a friend.

But so with all, from babes that play
  At hide-and-seek to God afar,
So all who hide too well away
  Must speak and tell us what they are.

THE NATIONAL LETTERS

By H. L. MENCKEN

We have, as every one knows, produced no such "new and greater literatus order" as that announced by old Walt. We have given a gaping world no books that "radiate," and surely none intelligibly comparable to stars and constellations. We have achieved no prodigies of the first class, and very few of the second class, and not many of the third and fourth classes. Our literature, despite several false starts that promised much is chiefly remarkable, now as always, for its respectable mediocrity. Its typical great man, in our own time, has been Howells, as its typical great man a generation ago was Lowell, and two generations ago, Irving. Viewed largely, its salient character appears as a sort of timorous flaccidity, an amiable hollowness. In bulk it grows more and more formidable, in ease and decorum it makes undoubted progress, and on the side of mere technic, of the bald capacity to write, it shows an ever-widening competence. But when one proceeds from such agencies and externals to the intrinsic substance, to the creative passion within, that substance quickly reveals itself as thin and watery, and

Prophecies unfulfilled

Our literary mediocrity

From *Prejudices: Second Series,* by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, authorized publisher.

Henry Louis Mencken was for some years a reporter and then an editor in his native city, Baltimore; he is now an editor of *Smart Set* and a contributing editor of the *Nation.* He has written many books, including studies of Nietzsche and Shaw. His *The American Language* was published in 1918; his *Prejudices,* first, second, and third series, have appeared 1919 to 1922. Mr. Mencken has frequently castigated the American college professor—but "more in sorrow than in anger"—for reasons which are stated in that part of "The National Letters" which I have refrained from quoting. "All my instincts are on the side of the professors," he explains. (*Prejudices: Second Series,* Knopf, 1920, pp. 81-82). "I esteem a man who devotes himself to a subject with hard diligence; I esteem even more a man who puts poverty and a shelf of books above profiteering and evenings of jazz; I am naturally monkish. Moreover, there are more Ph. D.'s on my family tree than even a Boston bluestocking can boast; there was a whole century when even the most ignorant of my house was at least *Juris utriusque Doctor.* But such predispositions should not be permitted to color sober researches."—Well, Mr. Mencken does find things out, and then the public hears of them.

that passion fades to something almost puerile. In all that mass of suave and often highly diverting writing there is no visible movement toward a distinguished and singular excellence, a signal national quality, a ripe and stimulating flavor, or, indeed, toward any other describable goal. What one sees is simply a general irresolution, a pervasive superficiality. There is no sober grappling with fundamentals, but only a shy sporting on the surface; there is not even any serious approach, such as Whitman dreamed of, to the special experiences and emergencies of the American people. When one turns to any other national literature—to Russian literature, say, or French, or German or Scandinavian—one is conscious immediately of a definite attitude toward the primary mysteries of existence, the unsolved and ever-fascinating problems at the bottom of human life, and of a definite way of translating their challenge into drama. These attitudes and preoccupations raise a literature above mere poetizing and tale-telling; they give it dignity and importance; above all, they give it national character. But it is precisely here that the literature of America, and especially the later literature, is most colorless and inconsequential. As if paralyzed by the national fear of ideas, the democratic distrust of whatever strikes beneath the prevailing platitudes, it evades all resolute and honest dealing with what, after all, must be every healthy literature's elementary materials. One is conscious of no brave and noble earnestness in it, of no generalized passion for intellectual and spiritual adventure, of no organized determination to think things out. What is there is a highly self-conscious and insipid correctness, a bloodless respectability, a submergence of matter in manner—in brief, what is there is the feeble, uninspiring quality of German painting and English music.

It was so in the great days and it is so today. There has always been hope and there has always been failure. Even the most optimistic prophets of future glories have been united, at all times, in their discontent with the here and now. "The mind of this country," said Emerson, speaking of what was currently visible in 1837, "is taught to aim at low objects. . . . There is no work for any but the decorous and the

complaisant. . . . Books are written . . . by men of talent . . . Who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles." And then, turning to the way out: "The office of the scholar (*i. e.,* of Whitman's 'literatus') is to cheer, to raise and to guide men by showing them *facts amid appearances.*" Whitman himself, a full generation later, found that office still unfilled. "Our fundamental want today in the United States," he said, "with closest, amplest reference to present conditions, and to the future, is of a class, and the clear idea of a class, of native authors, literatuses, far different, far higher in grade, than any yet known"—and so on, as I have already quoted him. And finally, to make an end of the prophets, there is Brooks, with nine-tenths of his book[1] given over, not to his prophecy—it is crowded, indeed, into the last few pages—but to a somewhat heavy mourning over the actual scene before him. On the side of letters, the æsthetic side, the side of ideas, we present to the world at large, he says, "the spectacle of a vast, undifferentiated herd of good-humored animals"—Knights of Pythias, Presbyterians, standard model Ph.D.'s, readers of the *Saturday Evening Post,* admirers of Richard Harding Davis and O. Henry, devotees of Hamilton Wright Mabie's "white list" of books, members of the Y. M. C. A. or the Drama League, weepers at chautauquas, wearers of badges, 100 per cent. patriots, children of God. Poe I pass over; I shall turn to him again later on. Nor shall I repeat the parrotings of Emerson and Whitman in the jeremiads of their innumerable heirs and assigns. What they all establish is what is already obvious: that American thinking, when it concerns itself with beautiful letters as when it concerns itself with religious dogma or political theory, is extraordinarily timid and superficial—that it evades the genuinely serious problems of life and art as if they were stringently taboo—that the outward virtues it undoubtedly shows are always the virtues, not of profundity, not of courage, not of originality, but merely those of an emasculated and often very trashy dilettantism.

[1] *Letters and Leadership,* by Van Wyck Brooks.

The Ashes of New England

The current scene is surely depressing enough. What one observes is a literature in three layers, and each inordinately doughy and uninspiring—each almost without flavor or savor. It is hard to say, with much critical plausibility, which layer deserves to be called the upper, but for decorum's sake the choice may be fixed upon that which meets with the approval of the reigning Lessings. This is the layer of the novels of the late Howells, Judge Grant, Alice Brown and the rest of the dwindling survivors of New England *Kultur,* of the brittle, academic poetry of Woodberry and the elder Johnson, of the tea-party essays of Crothers, Miss Repplier and company, and of the solemn, highly judicial, coroner's inquest criticism of More, Brownell, Babbitt and their imitators. Here we have manner, undoubtedly. The thing is correctly done; it is never crude or gross; there is in it a faint perfume of college-town society. But when this highly refined and attenuated manner is allowed for what remains is next to nothing. One never remembers a character in the novels of these aloof and de-Americanized Americans; one never encounters an idea in their essays; one never carries away a line out of their poetry. It is literature as an academic exercise for talented grammarians, almost as a genteel recreation for ladies and gentlemen of fashion—the exact equivalent, in the field of letters, of eighteenth century painting and German *Augenmusik.*

Dearth of intellectual audacity and aesthetic passion

What ails it, intrinsically, is a dearth of intellectual audacity and of æsthetic passion. Running through it, and characterizing the work of almost every man and woman producing it, there is an unescapable suggestion of the old Puritan suspicion of the fine arts as such—of the doctrine that they offer fit asylum for good citizens only when some ulterior and superior purpose is carried into them. This purpose, naturally enough, most commonly shows a moral tinge. The aim of poetry, it appears, is to fill the mind with lofty thoughts—not to give it joy, but to give it a grand and somewhat gaudy sense of virtue. The essay is a weapon against

the degenerate tendencies of the age. The novel, properly conceived, is a means of uplifting the spirit; its aim is to inspire, not merely to satisfy the low curiosity of man in man. The Puritan, of course, is not entirely devoid of æsthetic feeling. He has a taste for good form; he responds to style; he is even capable of something approaching a purely æsthetic emotion. But he fears this æsthetic emotion as an insinuating distraction from his chief business in life: the sober consideration of the all-important problem of conduct. Art is a temptation, a seduction, a Lorelei, and the Good Man may safely have traffic with it only when it is broken to moral uses—in other words, when its innocence is pumped out of it, and it is purged of gusto. It is precisely this gusto that one misses in all the work of the New England school, and in all the work of the formal schools that derive from it. One observes in such a fellow as Dr. Henry Van Dyke an excellent specimen of the whole clan. He is, in his way, a genuine artist. He has a hand for pretty verses. He wields a facile rhetoric. He shows, in indiscreet moments, a touch of imagination. But all the while he remains a sound Presbyterian with one eye on the devil. He is a Presbyterian first and an artist second, which is just as comfortable as trying to be a Presbyterian first and a chorus girl second. To such a man it must inevitably appear that a Molière, a Wagner, a Goethe or a Shakespeare was more than a little bawdy.

Our ethical criticism

The criticism that supports this decaying caste of literary Brahmins is grounded almost entirely upon ethical criteria. You will spend a long while going through the works of such typical professors as More, Phelps, Boynton, Burton, Perry, Brownell and Babbitt before ever you encounter a purely æsthetic judgment upon an æsthetic question. It is almost as if a man estimating daffodils should do it in terms of artichokes. Phelps' whole body of "we churchgoers" criticism—the most catholic and tolerant, it may be said in passing, that the faculty can show—consists chiefly of a plea for correctness, and particularly for moral correctness; he never gets very far from "the axiom of the moral law." Brownell argues eloquently for stands that would bind

an imaginative author as tightly as a Sunday-school superintendent is bound by the Ten Commandments and the Mann Act. Sherman tries to save Shakespeare for the right-thinking by proving that he was an Iowa Methodist—a member of his local Chamber of Commerce, a contemner of Reds, an advocate of democracy and the League of Nations, a patriotic dollar-a-year-man during the Armada scare. Elmer More devotes himself, year in and year out, to denouncing the Romantic movement, *i. e.,* the effort to emancipate the artist from formulæ and categories, and so make him free to dance with arms and legs. And Babbitt, to make an end, gives over his days and his nights to deploring Rousseau's anarchistic abrogation of "the veto power" over the imagination, leading to such "wrongness" in both art and life that it threatens "to wreck civilization." In brief, the alarms of schoolmasters. Not many of them deal specifically with the literature that is in being. It is too near to be quite nice. To More or Babbitt only death can atone for the primary offense of the artist. But what they preach nevertheless has its echoes contemporaneously, and those echoes, in the main, are woefully falsetto. I often wonder what sort of picture of These States is conjured up by foreigners who read, say, Crothers, Van Dyke, Babbitt, the later Winston Churchill, and the old maids of the Freudian suppression school. How can such a foreigner, moving in those damp, asthmatic mists, imagine such phenomena as Roosevelt, Billy Sunday, Bryan, the Becker case, the I. W. W., Newport, Palm Beach, the University of Chicago, Chicago itself—the whole, gross, glittering, excessively dynamic, infinitely grotesque, incredibly stupendous drama of American life?

As I have said, it is not often that the *ordentlichen Professoren* deign to notice contemporary writers, even of their own austere kidney. In all the Shelburne Essays there is none on Howells, or on Churchill, or on Mrs. Wharton; More seems to think of American literatture as expiring with Longfellow and Donald G. Mitchell. He has himself hinted that in the department of criticism there enters into the matter something beyond

A close corporation of criticism

mere aloof ignorance. "I soon learned (as editor of the pre-Bolshevik *Nation*)," he says, "that it was virtually impossible to get fair consideration for a book written by a scholar not connected with a university from a reviewer so connected." This class consciousness, however, should not apply to artists, who are admittedly inferior to professors, and it surely does not show itself in such men as Phelps and Spingarn, who seem to be very eager to prove that they are not professorial. Yet Phelps, in the course of a long work on the novel, pointedly omits all mention of such men as Dreiser, and Spingarn, as the aforesaid Brooks has said, "appears to be less inclined even than the critics with whom he is theoretically at war to play an active, public part in the secular conflict of darkness and light." When one comes to the *Privat-Dozenten* there is less remoteness, but what takes the place of it is almost as saddening. To Sherman and Percy Boynton the one aim of criticism seems to be the enforcement of correctness—in Emerson's phrase, the upholding of "some great decorum, some fetish of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man"—*e. g.*, Puritanism, democracy, monogamy, the League of Nations, the Wilsonian piffle. Even among the critics who escape the worst of this schoolmastering frenzy there is some touch of the heavy "culture" of the provincial schoolma'm. For example, consider Clayton Hamilton, M.A., vice-president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Here are the tests he proposes for dramatic critics, *i. e.*, for gentlemen chiefly employed in reviewing such characteristic American composition as the Ziegfeld Follies, "Up in Mabel's Room," "Ben-Hur" and "The Witching Hour":

1. Have you ever stood bareheaded in the nave of Amiens?
2. Have you ever climbed to the Acropolis by moonlight?
3. Have you ever walked with whispers into the hushed presence of the Frari Madonna of Bellini?

What could more brilliantly evoke an image of the eternal Miss Birch, blue veil flying and Baedeker in hand, plodding along faithfully through the interminable corridors and catacombs of the Louvre, the while bands are playing across the river, and young bucks in three-gallon hats are sparking the

gals, and the Jews and harlots uphold the traditions of French *hig leef* at Longchamps, and American deacons are frisked and debauched up on martyrs' hill? The banality of it is really too exquisite to be borne; the lack of humor is almost that of a Fifth avenue divine. One seldom finds in the pronunciamentoes of these dogged professors, indeed, any trace of either Attic or Gallic salt. When they essay to be jocose, the result is usually simply an elephantine whimsicality, by the chautauqua out of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Their satire is mere ill-nature. One finds it difficult to believe that they have ever read Lewes, or Hazlitt, or, above all, Saintsbury. I often wonder, in fact, how Saintsbury would fare, an unknown man, at the hands of, say, Brownell or More. What of his iconoclastic gayety, his boyish weakness for tweaking noses and pulling whiskers, his obscene delight in slang? . . .

The Ferment Underground

So much for the top layer. The bottom layer is given over to the literature of Greenwich Village, and by Greenwich Village, of course, I mean the whole of the advanced wing in letters, whatever the scene of its solemn declarations of independence and forlorn hopes. Miss Amy Lowell is herself a fully-equipped and automobile Greenwich Village, domiciled in Boston amid the crumbling gravestones of the New England *intelligentsia,* but often in waspish joy-ride through the hinterland. Vachel Lindsay, with his pilgrim's staff, is another. There is a third in Chicago, with *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* as its Exhibit A; it is, in fact, the senior of the Village fornenst Washington Square. Others you will find in far-flung factory towns, wherever there is a Little Theater, and a couple of local Synges and Chekovs to supply its stage. St. Louis, before Zoë Akins took flight, had the busiest of all these Greenwiches, and the most interesting. What lies under the whole movement is the natural revolt of youth against the pedagogical Prussianism of the professors. The oppression is extreme, and so the rebellion is extreme. Imagine a sentimental young man of the provinces, awaking one morning to the somewhat startling discovery that he is full of the divine

afflatus, and nominated by the hierarchy of hell to enrich the literature of his fatherland. He seeks counsel and aid. He finds, on consulting the official treatises on that literature, that its greatest poet was Longfellow. He is warned, reading More and Babbitt, that the literatus who lets feeling get into his compositions is a psychic fornicator, and under German influences. He has formal notice from Sherman that Puritanism is the lawful philosophy of the country, and that any dissent from it is treason. He gets the news, plowing through the New York *Times Book Review,* the *Nation* (so far to the left in its politics, but hugging the right so desperately in letters!) the *Bookman,* the *Atlantic* and the rest, that the salient artists of the living generation are such masters as Robert Underwood Johnson, Owen Wister, James Lane Allen, George E. Woodberry, Hamlin Garland, William Roscoe Thayer and Augustus Thomas, with polite bows to Margaret Deland, Mary Johnston and Ellen Glasgow. It slowly dawns upon him that Robert W. Chambers is an academician and Theodore Dreiser isn't, that Brian Hooker is and George Sterling isn't, that Henry Sydnor Harrison is and James Branch Cabell isn't, that "Chimmie Fadden" Townsend is and Sherwood Anderson isn't.

The young literatus

Is it any wonder that such a young fellow, after one or two sniffs of that prep-school fog, swings so vastly backward that one finds him presently in corduroy trousers and a velvet jacket, hammering furiously upon a pine table in a Macdougal street cellar, his mind full of malicious animal magnetism against even so amiable an old maid as Howells, and his discourse full of insane hair-splittings about *vers libre,* futurism, spectrism, vorticism, *Expressionismus, héliogabalisme?* The thing, in truth, is in the course of nature. The Spaniards who were outraged by the Palmerism of Torquemada did not become members of the Church of England; they became atheists. The American colonists, in revolt against a bad king, did not set up a good king; they set up a democracy, and so gave every honest man a chance to become a rogue on his own account. Thus the young literatus, emerging from the vacuum of Ohio or Ar-

kansas. An early success, as we shall see, tends to halt and moderate him. He finds that, after all, there is still a place for him, a sort of asylum for such as he, not over-populated or very warmly-heated, but nevertheless quite real. But if his sledding at the start is hard, if the corrective birch finds him while he is still tender, then he goes, as Andrew Jackson would say, the whole hog, and another voice is added to the raucous bellowing of the literary Reds.

Greenwich Village

I confess that the spectacle gives me some joy, despite the fact that the actual output of the Village is seldom worth noticing. What commonly engulfs and spoils the Villagers is their concern with mere technique. Among them, it goes without saying, are a great many frauds—poets whose yearning to write is unaccompanied by anything properly describable as capacity, dramatists whose dramas are simply Schnitzler and well-water, workers in prose fiction who gravitate swiftly and inevitably to the machine-made merchandise of the cheap magazines—in brief, American equivalents of the bogus painters of the Boul' Mich.' These pretenders, having no ideas, naturally try to make the most of forms. Half the wars in the Village are over form; content is taken for granted, or forgotten altogether. The extreme leftists, in fact, descend to a meaningless gibberish, both in prose and in verse; it is their last defiance to intellectualism. This childish concentration upon externals unfortunately tends to debauch the small minority that is of more or less genuine parts; the good are pulled in by the bad. As a result, the Village produces nothing that justifies all the noise it makes. I have yet to hear of a first-rate book coming out of it, or a short story of arresting quality, or even a poem of any solid distinction. As one of the editors of a magazine which specializes in the work of new authors I am in an exceptional position to report. Probably nine-tenths of the stuff written in the dark dens and alleys south of the arch comes to my desk soon or late, and I go through all of it faithfully. It is, in the overwhelming main, jejune and imitative. The prose is quite without distinction, either in matter or in manner. The verse seldom gets beyond a hollow audaciousness, not unlike

that of cubist painting. It is not often, indeed, that even personality is in it; all of the Villagers seem to write alike. "Unless one is an expert in some detective method," said a recent writer in *Poetry,* "one is at a loss to assign correctly the ownership of much free verse—that is, if one plays fairly and refuses to look at the signature until one has ventured a guess. It is difficult, for instance, to know whether Miss Lowell is writing Mr. Bynner's verse, or whether he is writing hers." Moreover, this monotony keeps to a very low level. There is no poet in the movement who has produced anything even remotely approaching the fine lyrics of Miss Reese, Miss Teasdale and John McClure, and for all its war upon the *cliché* it can show nothing to equal the *cliché*-free beauty of Robert Loveman's "Rain Song." In the drama the Village has gone further. In Eugene O'Neill, Rita Wellman and Zoë Akins it offers dramatists who are obviously many cuts above the well-professored mechanicians who pour out of Prof. Dr. Baker's *Ibsenfabrik* at Cambridge. But here we must probably give the credit, not to any influence residing within the movement itself, but to mere acts of God. Such pieces as O'Neill's one-acters, Miss Wellman's "The Gentile Wife" and Miss Akins' extraordinary "Papa" lie quite outside the Village scheme of things. There is no sign of formal revolt in them. They are simply first-rate work, done miraculously in a third-rate land.

But if the rebellion is thus sterile of direct results, and, in more than one aspect, fraudulent and ridiculous, it is at all events an evidence of something not to be disregarded, and that something is the gradual formulation of a challenge to the accepted canons in letters and to the accepted canon lawyers. The first hoots come from a tatterdemalion horde of rogues and vagabonds without the gates, but soon or late, let us hope, they will be echoed in more decorous quarters, and with much greater effect. The Village, in brief, is an earnest that somewhere or other new seeds are germinating. Between the young tutor who launches into letters with imitations of his seminary chief's imitations of Agnes Repplier's imitations of Charles Lamb,

Germination

and the young peasant who tries to get his honest exultations into free verse there can be no hesitant choice: the peasant is, by long odds, the sounder artist, and, what is more, the sounder American artist. Even the shy and somewhat stagey carnality that characterizes the Village has its high symbolism and its profound uses. It proves that, despite repressions unmatched in civilization in modern times, there is still a sturdy animality in American youth, and hence good health. The poet hugging his Sonia in a Washington square beanery, and so giving notice to all his world that he is a devil of a fellow, is at least a better man than the emasculated stripling in a Y. M. C. A. gospel-mill, pumped dry of all his natural appetites and the vacuum filled with double-entry book-keeping, business economics and autoerotism. In so foul a nest of imprisoned and fermenting sex as the United States, plain fornication becomes a mark of relative decency.

In the Literary Abattoir

But the theme is letters, not wickedness. The upper and lower layers have been surveyed. There remains the middle layer, the thickest and perhaps the most significant of the three. By the middle layer I mean the literature that fills the magazines and burdens the book-counters in the department-stores—the literature adorned by such artists as Richard Harding Davis, Rex Beach, Emerson Hough, O. Henry, James Whitcomb Riley, Augustus Thomas, Robert W. Chambers, Henry Sydnor Harrison, Owen Johnson, Cyrus Townsend Brady, Irvin Cobb and Mary Roberts Rinehart—in brief, the literature that pays like a bucket-shop or a soap-factory, and is thus thoroughly American. At the bottom this literature touches such depths of banality that it would be difficult to match it in any other country. The "inspirational" and patriotic essays of Dr. Frank Crane, Orison Sweet Marden, Porter Emerson Browne, Gerald Stanley Lee, E. S. Martin, Ella Wheeler Wilcox and the Rev. Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis, the novels of Harold Bell Wright, Eleanor H. Porter and Gene Stratton-Porter, and the mechanical sentimentalities in prose and verse that fill the cheap fiction

Popular literature

magazines—this stuff has a native quality that is as unmistakable as that of Mother's Day, Billy-Sundayism or the Junior Order of United American Mechanics. It is the natural outpouring of a naïve and yet half barbarous people, full of delight in a few childish and inaccurate ideas. But it would be a grave error to assume that the whole of the literature of the middle layer is of the same infantile quality. On the contrary, a great deal of it—for example, the work of Mrs. Rinehart, and that of Corra Harris, Gouverneur Morris, Harold MacGrath and the late O. Henry—shows an unmistakably technical excellence, and even a certain civilized sophistication in point of view. Moreover, this literature is constantly graduating adept professors into something finer, as witness Booth Tarington, Zona Gale, Ring W. Lardner and Montague Glass. S. L. Clemens came out of forty years ago. Nevertheless, its general tendency is distinctly in the other direction. It seduces by the power of money, and by the power of great acclaim no less. One constantly observes the collapse and surrender of writers who started out with aims far above that of the magazine nabob. I could draw up a long, long list of such victims: Henry Milner Rideout, Jack London, Owen Johnson, Chester Bailey Fernald, Hamlin Garland, Will Levington Comfort, Stephen French Whitman, James Hopper, Harry Leon Wilson, and so on. They had their forerunner, in the last generation, in Bret Harte. It is, indeed, a characteristic American phenomenon for a young writer to score a success with novel and meritorious work, and then to yield himself to the best-seller fever, and so disappear down the sewers. Even the man who struggles to emerge again is commonly hauled back. For example, Louis Joseph Vance, Rupert Hughes, George Bronson-Howard, and, to go back a few years, David Graham Phillips and Elbert Hubbard—all men flustered by high aspiration, and yet all pulled down by the temptations below. Even Frank Norris showed signs of yielding. The pull is genuinely powerful. Above lies not only isolation, but also a dogged and malignant sort of opposition. Below, as Norris has frankly admitted, there is the place at

Aiken, the motor-car, babies, money in the bank, and the dignity of an important man.

The Post

It is a commonplace of the envious to put all the blame upon the *Saturday Evening Post,* for in its pages many of the Magdalens of letters are to be found, and out of its bulging coffers comes much of the lure. But this is simply blaming the bull for the sins of all the cows. The *Post,* as a matter of fact, is a good deal less guilty than such magazines as the *Cosmopolitan, Hearst's, McClure's* and the *Metropolitan,* not to mention the larger women's magazines. In the *Post* one often discerns an effort to rise above the level of shoe-drummer fiction. It is edited by a man who, almost alone among editors of the great periodicals of the country, is himself a writer of respectable skill. It has brought out (after lesser publications unearthed them) a number of authors of very solid talents, notably Glass, Lardner and E. W. Howe. It has been extremely hospitable to men not immediately comprehensible to the mob, for example, Dreiser and Hergesheimer. Most of all, it has avoided the Barnum-like exploitation of such native bosh-mongers as Crane, Hillis and Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and of such exotic mountebanks as D'Annunzio, Hall Caine and Maeterlinck. In brief, the *Post* is a great deal better than ever Greenwich Village and the Cambridge campus are disposed to admit. It is the largest of all the literary Hog Islands, but it is by no means the worst. Appealing primarily to the great masses of right-thinking and unintelligent Americans, it must necessarily print a great deal of preposterous tosh, but it flavors the mess with not a few things of a far higher quality, and at its worst it is seldom downright idiotic. In many of the other great magazines one finds stuff that it would be difficult to describe in any other words. It is gaudily romantic, furtively sexual, and full of rubber-stamp situations and personages—a sort of amalgam of the worst drivel of Marie Corelli, Elinor Glyn, E. Phillips Oppenheim, William Le Quex and Hall Caine. This is the literature of the middle layer—the product of the national Rockefellers and Duponts of letters. This is the sort of thing that the young author of facile pen is encouraged to manufac-

ture. This is the material of the best sellers and the movies.

Of late it is the movies that have chiefly provoked its composition: the rewards they offer are even greater than those held out by the commercial book-publishers and the train-boy magazines. The point of view of an author responsive to such rewards was recently set forth very naïvely in the *Author's League Bulletin.* This author undertook, in a short article, to refute the fallacies of an unknown who ventured to protest against the movies on the ground that they called only for bald plots, elementary and generally absurd, and that all the rest of a sound writer's equipment—"the artistry of his style, the felicity of his apt expression, his subtlety and thoroughness of observation and comprehension and sympathy, the illuminating quality of his analysis of motive and character, even the fundamental skillful development of the bare plot"—was disdained by the Selznicks, Goldfishes, Zukors and other such *entrepreneurs,* and by the overwhelming majority of their customers. I quote from the reply:

> There are some conspicuous word merchants who deal in the English language, but the general public doesn't clamor for their wares. They write for the "thinking class." The élite, the discriminating. As a rule, they scorn the crass commercialism of the magazines and movies and such catch-penny devices. However, literary masterpieces live because they have been and will be read, not by the few, but by the many. That was true in the time of Homer, and even today the first move made by an editor when he receives a manuscript, or a gentle reader when he buys a book, or a T. B. M. when he sinks into an orchestra chair is to look around for John Henry Plot. If Mr. Plot is too long delayed in arriving or doesn't come at all, the editor usually sends regrets, the reader yawns and the tired business man falls asleep. It's a sad sate of affairs and awful tough on art, but it can't be helped.

Observe the lofty scorn of mere literature—the superior irony at the expense of everything beyond the bumping of boobs. Note the sound judgment as to the function and fate of literary masterpieces, *e. g.*, "Endymion," "The Canterbury Tales," "Faust," "Typhoon." Give your eye to the chaste diction—"John Henry Plot," "T. B. M.," "awful tough," and so on. No doubt you will at once assume that this curious counterblast to literature was written by some former bartender now engaged in composing scenarios for Pearl White and Theda Bara. But it was not. It was written and signed by the president of the Authors' League of America.

Wanted—true aristocrats of letters

Here we have, unconsciously revealed, the secret of the depressing badness of what may be called the staple fiction of the country—the sort of stuff that is done by the Richard Harding Davises, Rex Beaches, Houghs, McCutcheons, and their like, male and female. The worst of it is not that it is addressed primarily to shoe-drummers and shop-girls; the worst of it is that it is written by authors who *are,* to all intellectual intents and purposes, shoe-drummers and shop-girls. American literature, even on its higher levels, seldom comes out of the small and lonesome upper classes of the people. An American author with traditions behind him and an environment about him comparable to those, say, of George Moore, or Hugh Walpole, or E. F. Benson is and always has been relatively rare. On this side of the water the arts, like politics and religion, are chiefly in the keeping of persons of obscure origin, defective education and elemental tastes. Even some of the most violent upholders of the New England superstition are aliens to the actual New England heritage; one discovers, searching "Who's Who in America," that they are recent fugitives from the six-day sock and saleratus *Kultur* of the cow and hog States. The artistic merchandise produced by liberated yokels of that sort is bound to show its intellectual newness, which is to say, its deficiency in civilized culture and sophistication. It is, on the plane of letters, precisely what evangelical Christianity is on the plane of religion, to wit, the product of ill-informed, emotional and more or less pushing and oafish folk. Life, to such Harvardized peasants, is not a mystery; it is something absurdly simple, to be described with surety and in a few words. If they set up as critics their criticism is all a matter of facile labeling, chiefly ethical; find the pigeon-hole, and the rest is easy. If they presume to discuss the great problems of human society, they are equally ready with their answers: draw up and pass a harsh enough statute, and the corruptible will straightway put on incorruption. And if, fanned by the soft breath of beauty, they go into practice as creative artists, as poets, as dramatists, as novelists, then one learns from them that we inhabit a country that is the model and despair of other

states, that its culture is coextensive with human culture and enlightenment, and that every failure to find happiness under that culture is the result of sin.

Underlying Causes

Here is one of the fundamental defects of American fiction—perhaps the one character that sets it off sharply from all other known kinds of contemporary fiction. It habitually exhibits, not a man of delicate organization in revolt against the inexplicable tragedy of existence, but a man of low sensibilities and elemental desires yielding himself gladly to his environment, and so achieving what, under a third-rate civilization, passes for success. To get on: this is the aim. To weigh and reflect, to doubt and rebel: this is the thing to be avoided. I describe the optimistic, the inspirational, the Authors' League, the popular magazine, the peculiarly American school. In character creation its masterpiece is the advertising agent who, by devising some new and super-imbecile boob-trap, puts his hook-and-eye factory "on the map," ruins all other factories, marries the daughter of his boss, and so ends as an eminent man. Obviously, the drama underlying such fiction—what Mr. Beach would call its John Henry Plot—is false drama, Sunday-school drama, puerile and disgusting drama. It is the sort of thing that awakens a response only in men who are essentially unimaginative, timorous and degraded—in brief, in democrats, bagmen, yahoos. The man of reflective habit cannot conceivably take any passionate interest in the conflicts it deals with. He doesn't want to marry the daughter of the owner of the hook-and-eye factory; he would probably burn down the factory itself if it ever came into his hands. What interests this man is the far more poignant and significant conflict between a salient individual and the harsh and meaningless fiats of destiny, the unintellibible mandates and vagaries of God. His hero is not one who yields and wins, but one who resists and fails.

'Good enough for me!'

Most of these conflicts, of course, are internal, and hence do not make themselves visible in the overt melodrama of the

Real tragedy

Beaches, Davises and Chamberses. A superior man's struggle in the world is not with exterior lions, trusts, margraves, policemen, rivals in love, German spies, radicals and tornadoes, but with the obscure, atavistic impulses within him—the impulses, weaknesses and limitations that war with his notion of what life should be. Nine times out of ten he succumbs. Nine times out of ten he must yield to the dead hand. Nine times out of ten his aspiration is almost infinitely above his achievement. The result is that we see him sliding downhill—his ideals breaking up, his hope petering out, his character in decay. Character in decay is thus the theme of the great bulk of superior fiction. One has it in Dostoievsky, in Balzac, in Hardy, in Conrad, in Flaubert, in Zola, in Turgenieff, in Goethe, in Sudermann, in Bennett, and, to come home, in Dreiser. In nearly all first-rate novels the hero is defeated. In perhaps a majority he is completely destroyed. The hero of the inferior—*i. e.,* the typically American—novel engages in no such doomed and fateful combat. His conflict is not with the inexplicable ukases of destiny, the limitations of his own strength, the dead hand upon him, but simply with the superficial desires of his elemental fellow men. He thus has a fair chance of winning—and in bad fiction that chance is always converted into a certainty. So he marries the daughter of the owner of the factory and eventually gobbles the factory itself. His success gives thrills to persons who can imagine no higher aspiration. He embodies their optimism, as the other hero embodies the pessimism of more introspective and idealistic men. He is the protagonist of that great majority which is so inferior that it is quite unconscious of its inferiority.

It is this superficiality of the inferior man, it seems to me, that is the chief hallmark of the American novel. Whenever one encounters a novel that rises superior to it the thing takes on a subtle but unmistakable air of foreignness—for example, Frank Norris' "Vandover and the Brute," Hergesheimer's "The Lay Anthony" and Miss Cather's "My Antonía," or, to drop to short stories, Stephen Crane's "The Blue Hotel" and

Mrs. Wharton's "Ethan Frome." The short story is commonly regarded, at least by American critics, as a preëminently American form; there are even patriots who argue that Bret Harte invented it. It meets very accurately, in fact, certain characteristic demands of the American temperament: it is simple, economical and brilliantly effective. Yet the same hollowness that marks the American novel also marks the American short story. Its great masters, in late years, have been such cheese-mongers as Davis, with his servant-girl romanticism, and O. Henry, with his smoke-room and variety show smartness. In the whole canon of O. Henry's work you will not find a single recognizable human character; his people are unanimously marionettes; he makes Mexican brigands, Texas cowmen and New York cracksmen talk the same highly ornate Broadwayese. The successive volumes of Edward J. O'Brien's "Best Short-Story" series throw a vivid light upon the feeble estate of the art in the land. O'Brien, though his æsthetic judgments are ludicrous, at least selects stories that are thoroughly representative; his books are trade successes because the crowd is undoubtedly with him. He has yet to discover a single story that even the most naïve professor would venture to mention in the same breath with Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," or Andrieff's "Silence," or Sudermann's "Das Sterbelied," or the least considerable tale by Anatole France. In many of the current American makers of magazine short stories —for example, Gouverneur Morris—one observes, as I have said, a truly admirable technical skill. They have mastered the externals of the form. They know how to get their effects. But in content their work is as hollow as a jug. Such stuff has no imaginable relation to life as men live it in the world. It is as artificial as the heroic strut and romantic eyes of a moving-picture actor.

The short story

I have spoken of the air of foreignness that clings to certain exceptional American compositions. In part it is based upon a psychological trick— upon the surprise which must inevitably seize upon any one who encounters a decent piece of writing in so vast a desert

Foreign influence

of mere literacy. But in part it is grounded soundly enough on the facts. The native author of any genuine force and originality is almost invariably found to be under strong foreign influences, either English or Continental. It was so in the earliest days. Freneau, the poet of the Revolution, was thoroughly French in blood and traditions. Irving, as H. R. Haweis has said, "took to England as a duck takes to water," and was in exile seventeen years. Cooper, with the great success of "The Last of the Mohicans" behind him, left the country in disgust and was gone for seven years. Emerson, Bryant, Lowell, Hawthorne and even Longfellow kept their eyes turned across the water; Emerson, in fact, was little more than an importer and popularizer of German and French ideas. Bancroft studied in Germany; Prescott, like Irving, was enchanted by Spain. Poe, unable to follow the fashion, invented mythical travels to save his face—to France, to Germany, to the Greek isles. The Civil War revived the national consciousness enormously, but it did not halt the movement of *émigrés*. Henry James, in the seventies, went to England, Bierce and Bret Harte followed him, and even Mark Twain, absolutely American though he was, was forever pulling up stakes and setting out for Vienna, Florence or London. Only poverty tied Whitman to the soil; his audience, for many years, was chiefly beyond the water, and there, too, he often longed to be. This distaste for the national scene is often based upon a genuine alienness. The more, indeed, one investigates the ancestry of Americans who have won distinction in the fine arts, the more one discovers tempting game for the critical Know Nothings. Whitman was half Dutch, Harte was half Jew, Poe was partly German, James had an Irish grandfather, Howells was largely Irish and German, Dreiser is German and Hergesheimer is Pennsylvania Dutch. Fully a half of the painters discussed in John C. van Dyke's "American Painting and Its Tradition" were of mixed blood, with the Anglo-Saxon plainly recessive. And of the five poets singled out for encomium by Miss Lowell in "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry" one is a Swede, two are partly German, one was educated in the German language, and three of the five exiled themselves to England as

soon as they got out of their nonage. The exiles are of all sorts: Frank Harris, Vincent O'Sullivan, Ezra Pound, Herman Scheffauer, T. S. Eliot, Henry B. Fuller, Stuart Merrill, Edith Wharton. They go to England, France, Germany, Italy —anywhere to escape. Even at home the literatus is perceptibly foreign in his mien. If he lies under the New England tradition he is furiously colonial—more English than the English. If he turns to revolt, he is apt to put on a French hat and a Russian red blouse. *The Little Review,* the organ of the extreme wing of *révoltés,* is so violently exotic that several years ago, during the plupatriotic days of the war, some of its readers protested. With characteristic lack of humor it replied with an American number—and two of the stars of that number bore the fine old Anglo-Saxon names of Ben Hecht and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.

This tendency of American literature, the moment it begins to show enterprise, novelty and significance, to radiate an alien smell is not an isolated phenomenon. The same smell accompanies practically all other sorts of intellectual activity in the republic. Whenever one hears that a new political theory is in circulation, or a scientific heresy, or a movement toward rationalism in religion, it is always safe to guess that some discontented stranger or other has a hand in it. In the newspapers and on the floor of Congress a new heterodoxy is aways denounced forthwith as a product of foreign plotting, and here public opinion undoubtedly supports both the press and the politicians, and with good reason. The native culture of the country—that is, the culture of the low caste Anglo-Saxons who preserve the national tradition—is almost completely incapable of producing ideas. It is a culture that roughly corresponds to what the culture of England would be if there were no universities over there, and no caste of intellectual individualists and no landed aristocracy—in other words, if the tone of the national thinking were set by the nonconformist industrials, the camorra of Welsh and Scotch political scoundrels, and the town and country mobs. As we shall see, the United States has not yet produced anything properly describable as an aristocracy, and so there is no impediment to

the domination of the inferior orders. Worse, the Anglo-Saxon strain, second-rate at the start, has tended to degenerate steadily to lower levels in New England, very markedly. The result is that there is not only a great dearth of ideas in the land, but also an active and relentless hostility to ideas. The chronic suspiciousness of the inferior man here has full play; never in modern history has there been another civilization showing so vast a body of prohibitions and repressions, in both conduct and thought. The second result is that intellectual experimentation is chiefly left to the immigrants of the later migrations, and to the small sections of the native population that have been enriched with their blood. For such a pure Anglo-Saxon as Cabell to disport himself in the field of ideas is a rarity in the United States—and no exception to the rule that I have just mentioned, for Cabell belongs to an aristocracy that is now almost extinct, and has no more in common with the general population than a Baltic baron has with the indigenous herd of Letts and Esthonians. All the arts in America are thoroughly exotic. Music is almost wholly German or Italian, painting is French, literature may be anything from English to Russian, architecture (save when it becomes a mere branch of engineering) is a maddening phantasmagoria of borrowings. Even so elemental an art as that of cookery shows no native development, and is greatly disesteemed by Americans of the Anglo-Saxon majority; any decent restaurant that one blunders upon in the land is likely to be French, and if not French, then Italian or German or Chinese. So with the sciences: they have scarcely any native development. Organized scientific research began in the country with the founding of the Johns Hopkins University, a bald imitation of the German universities, and long held suspect by native opinion. Even after its great success, indeed, there was rancorous hostility to its scheme of things on chauvinistic grounds, and some years ago efforts were begun to Americanize it, with the result that it is now sunk to the level of Princeton, Amherst and other such glorified high-schools, and is dominated by native savants who would be laughed at in any Continental university. Science, oppressed by such assaults

from below, moves out of the academic grove into the freer air of the great foundations, where the pursuit of the shy fact is uncontaminated by football and social pushing. The greatest of these foundations is the Rockefeller Institute. Its salient men are such investigators as Flexner, Loeb and Carrell—all of them Continental Jews.

* * * *

As it is not fair to Mr. Mencken to rest the matter here, I quote without authority from the latter part of his essay. "So far, the disease. As to the cause, I have delivered a few hints. I now describe it particularly. It is, in brief, a defect in the general culture of the country—one reflected not only in the national literature, but also in the national political theory, the national attitude toward religion and morals, the national habit in all departments of thinking. It is the lack of a civilized artistocracy, secure in its position, animated by an intelligent curiosity, skeptical of all facile generalizations, superior to the sentimentality of the mob, and delighting in the battle of ideas for its own sake." But it is aristocracy in the finer sense that the critic has in mind. "Its first and most salient character is its interior security, and the chief visible evidence of that security is the freedom that goes with it—not only freedom in act, the divine right of the aristocrat to do what he jolly well pleases, so long as he does not violate the primary guarantees and obligations of his class, but also and more importantly freedom in thought, the liberty to try and err, the right to be his own man. It is the instinct of a true aristocracy, not to punish eccentricity by expulsion, but to throw a mantle of protection about it—to safeguard it from the suspicions and resentments of the lower orders. Those lower orders are inert, timid, inhospitable to ideas, hostile to changes, faithful to a few maudlin superstitions. All progress goes on on the higher levels. It is there that salient personalities, made secure by artificial immunities, may oscillate most widely from the normal track. It is within that intrenched fold, out of reach of the immemorial certainties of the mob, that extraordinary men of the lower orders may find their city of refuge, and breathe a clear air. This, indeed, is at once the hall-mark and the justification of an aristocracy —that it is beyond responsibility to the general masses of men, and hence superior to both their degraded longings and their no less degraded aversions. It is nothing if it is not autonomous, curious, venturesome, courageous, and everything if it is. It is the custodian of the qualities that make for change and experiment; it is the class that organizes danger to the service of the race; it pays for its high prerogatives by standing in the forefront of the fray."

From doctrine like this no thinking man who is honest—and the man who dares not be honest is essentially not a thinking man—will dissent. It is at the heart of "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1865), of Matthew Arnold. Criticism is for Arnold "a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." And true culture is "a study of perfection," designed first "to render an intelligent being yet more intelligent," and secondly, "to make reason and the will of God prevail." "What distinguishes culture," continues Arnold in "Sweetness and Light," "is that it is possessed by the scientific passion as well as by the passion for doing good; that it demands worthy notions of

reason and the will of God, and does not readily suffer its own crude conceptions to substitute themselves for them."

Arnold talks of "sweetness and light," of which phrase Mr. Mencken is sick. But like the English critic, the American is for living by ideas, and the two agree that this will not be made possible by Barbarians, Philistines, or Populace—the upper class vulgarized, the middle class materialized, the lower class pauperized—but only by the Children of Light, to complete Arnold's categories. Mr. Mencken prefers to call them "genuine aristocrats." But he knows quite well that something of what these believe in as the brightest of their light—say, their competency for leadership?—is little better than darkness.

Doubtless neither Mr. Mencken nor his enemies—and perhaps it is for the enemies he has made that Mr. Mencken will in the end be loved—will accept calmly this association with Arnold. I will, therefore, make an end by doing my worst. It is the fashion to sneer at Arnold because of his moral evaluations. But if, as he reminds us, whatever has to do with the question *How to live?* must be intrinsically moral, and if, as we see, every other artist and critic implies that art and the love of art make life fuller and more human, then Arnold is right and we are all with him. As for Mr. Mencken, the secret of his indictment of "The National Letters" and of most other is his instinctive searching for perfection, though his expression of this is so frequently negative—the condemnation of the imperfect. Mr. Mencken writes criticism because other men's productions stimulate him to thinking and because he enjoys writing. He submits to being labeled an Impressionist, but he is less concerned to watch the motions of his own soul in the presence of masterpieces, or of monsterpieces, than to probe and measure and arraign these. He realizes this too: "It is impressionism that is not to be monkeyed with: it depends too much on the impressionist." In fact, Mr. Mencken is judicial in principle as he is dogmatic in tone. After he has manhandled a book, he points relentlessly to the writer's character and environment, to individual and national ideas, aims, disciplines, and satisfactions as the causes of the art—which they are, even if Taine and Arnold have discredited themselves by saying so.

The ultimate bitterness of the thinking man is not that in honesty he must often in his own mind abase himself before the deeds of some great doer which he knows he could not match if he would. It is that he must perceive the futility of the most valiant doing—including the doing of valiant criticism. *Cui bono?* Matthew Arnold wrote about the population of the British Isles and gave us "Dover Beach." Mr. Mencken writes about the population of the American universities, about Being an American, about the membership of our National Institute of Arts and Letters: *his* poems are out of print. Instinctively he has engaged in a running fight with stupidity, folly, and pretense wherever found, but he is not sufficiently disinterested or cynical to feel comfortable while realizing the general futility of such warefare. He tries to disguise his feeling under a harsh and ribald manner. But he too is essentially a moralist.—*Editor.*

THE BARBARIC NATURALISM OF THEODORE DREISER

By STUART P. SHERMAN

The layman who listens reverently to the reviewers discussing the new novels and to the novelists discussing themselves can hardly escape persuasion that a great change has rather recently taken place in the spirit of the age, in the literature which reflects it, and in the criticism which judges it. The nature of the supposed revolution may be briefly summarized.

The elder generation was in love with illusions, and looked at truth through a glass darkly and timorously. The artist, tongue-tied by authority and trammeled by aesthetic and moral conventions, selected, suppressed, and rearranged the data of experience and observation. The critic, "morally subsidized," regularly professed his disdain for a work of art in which no light glimmered above "the good and the beautiful."

The present age is fearless and is freeing itself from illusions. Now, for the first time in history, men are facing unabashed the facts of life. "Death or life" we cry, "give us only reality!" Now, for the first time in the history of English literature, fiction is become a flawless mirror held up to the living world. Rejecting nothing, altering nothing, it presents to us—let us take our terms from the bright lexicon of the reviewer—a "transcript," a "cross-section," a "slice," a "photographic" or "cinematographic" reproduction of life. The critic who keeps pace with the movement no longer asks whether the artist has created beauty or glorified goodness, but merely whether he has told the truth.

Reality at any price

Mr. Dreiser, in his latest novel, *The Genius,* describes a canvas by a painter of this austere modern school: "Raw reds, raw greens, dirty gray paving stones—such faces! Why, this

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thing fairly shouted its facts. It seemed to say: 'I'm dirty, I am commonplace, I am grim, I am shabby, but I am life.' And there was no apologizing for anything in it, no glossing anything over. Bang! Smash! Crack! came the facts one after another, with a bitter,brutal insistence on their so-ness." If you do not like what is in the picture, you are to be crushed by the retort that perhaps you do not like what is in life. Perhaps you have not courage to confront reality. Perhaps you had better read the chromatic fairy-tales with the children. Men of sterner stuff exclaim, "Thank God for a realist!"

Un dossier **State *vs.* Dreiser**

Mr. Dreiser is a novelist of the new school, for whom we have been invited off and on these fourteen years to "thank God"—a form of speech, by the way, which crept into the language before the dawn of "modern" realism. He has performed with words what his hero performed with paint. He has presented the facts of life "one after another with a bitter, brutal insistence on their so-ness," which marks him as a "man of the hour," a "portent"—the successor of Mr. Howells and Mr. James? In the case of a realist, biographical details are always relevant. Mr. Dreiser was born of German-American parents in Terre Haute, Indiana, 1871. He was educated in the Indiana public schools and at the State University. He was engaged in newspaper work in Chicago, St. Louis, New York, and elsewhere, from 1892 to 1910. He has published two books of travel: *A Traveller At Forty,* 1913, and *A Hoosier Holiday,* 1916, which, without the support of his fiction, would entitle him to dispute with Mr. Viereck for the title of vulgarest voice yet heard in American literature; also a collection of one-act dramas, *Plays of the Natural and Supernatural,* 1916. But he has laid reality bare for us most generously in his five novels, published as follows: *Sister Carrie,* 1901; *Jennie Gerhardt,* 1911; *The Financier,* 1912; *The Titan,* 1914; and *The Genius,* 1915. These five works constitute a singularly homogeneous mass of fiction. I do not find any moral value in them, nor any memorable beauty—of their truth I shall speak later; but I am greatly impressed by them as serious representatives of a new note in American literature, coming from that "ethnic"

element of our mixed population which, we are assured by competent authorities, is to redeem us from Puritanism and insure our artistic salvation. They abundantly illustrate, furthermore, the methods and intentions of our recent courageous veracious realism. Before we thank God for it let us consider a little more closely what is offered us.

The first step toward the definition of Mr. Dreiser's special contribution is to blow away the dust with which the exponents of the new realism seek to becloud the perceptions of our "reverent layman." In their main pretensions there are large elements of conscious and unconscious sham.

It should clear the air to say that courage in facing and veracity in reporting the facts of life are no more characteristic of Theodore Dreiser than of John Bunyan. These moral traits are not the peculiar marks of the new school; they are the marks common to every great movement of literature within the memory of man. Each literary generation detaching itself from its predecessor—whether it has called its own movement Classical or Romantic or what not—has revolted in the interest of what it took to be a more adequate representation of reality. No one who is not drunken with the egotism of the hour, no one who has penetrated with sober senses into the spirit of any historical period anterior to his own, will fall into the indecency of declaring his own age pre-eminent in the desire to see and to tell the truth. The real distinction between one generation and another is in the thing which each recognizes as the *essential* reality for it. The difference between Bunyan and Dreiser is in the order of facts which each reports.

Art must transform

It seems necessary also to declare at periodic intervals that there is no such thing as a "cross-section" or "slice" or "photograph" of life in art—least of all in the realistic novel. The use of these catchwords is but a clever hypnotizing pass of the artist, employed to win the assent of the reader to the reality of the show, and in some cases, to evade moral responsibility for any questionable features of the exhibition. A realistic novel no more than any other kind of a novel can escape being a composition,

involving preconception, imagination, and divination. Yet, hearing one of our new realists expound his doctrine, one might suppose that writing a novel was a process analogous to photographing wild animals in their habitat by trap and flashlight. He, if you will believe him, does not invite his subjects, nor group them, nor compose their features, nor furnish their setting. He but exposes the sensitized plate of his mind. The pomp of life goes by, and springs the trap. The picture, of course, does not teach nor preach nor moralize. It simply re-presents. The only serious objection to this figurative explanation of the artistic process is the utter dissimilarity between the blank impartial photographic plate, commemorating everything that confronts it, and the crowded, inveterately selective mind, which, like a magnet, snatches the facts of life that are subject to its influence out of their casual order and redisposes them in a pattern of its own.

In the case of any specified novelist, the facts chosen and the pattern assumed by them are determined by his central theory or "philosophy of life"; and this is precisely criticism's justification for inquiring into the adequacy of any novelist's general ideas. In vain, the new realist throws up his hands with protestations of innocence, and cries: "Search me. I carry no concealed weapons. I run life into no preconceived mold. I have no philosophy. My business is only to observe, like a man of science, and to record what I have seen." He cannot observe without a theory, nor compose and record his observations without betraying his theory to any critical eye.

Thesis or motor-set

As it happens, the man of science who most profoundly influenced the development of the new realistic novel, Charles Darwin, more candid than the writers of "scientific" fiction, frankly declared that he could not observe without a theory. When he had tentatively formulated a general law, and had begun definitely to look for evidence of its operation, then first the substantiating facts leaped abundantly into his vision. His *Origin of Species* has the unity of a work of art, because the recorded observations support a thesis. The French novelists who in the last century developed the novel of contemporary life learned as much,

perhaps, from Darwin's art as from his science. The technique of fiction imitated the procedure of scientific research. Balzac had emphasized the relation between man and his social milieu; the Goncourts emphasized the importance of extensive "human documents"; Zola emphasized the value of scientific hypotheses. He deliberately adopted the materialistic philosophy of the period as his guide in observation and as his unifying principle in composition. His theory of the causes of social phenomena, which was derived largely from medical and physiological treatises, operated like a powerful magnet among the chaotic facts of life, rejecting some, selecting others, and redisposing them in the pattern of the *roman naturaliste*. Judicious French critics said: "My dear man," or words to that effect, "your representations of life are inadequate. This which you are offering us with so earnest an air is not reality. It is your own private nightmare." When they had exposed his theory, they had condemned his art.

Let us, then, dismiss Mr. Dreiser's pretensions to superior courage and veracity, the photographic transcript, and unbiased service of truth; and let us seek for his definition in his general theory of life, in the order of facts which he records, and in the pattern of his representations.

Mr. Dreiser's philosophy of life—

The impressive unity of effect produced by Mr. Dreiser's five novels is due to the fact that they are all illustrations of a crude and naïvely simple naturalistic philosophy, such as we find in the mouths of exponents of the new *Real-Politik*. Each book, with its bewildering mass of detail, is a ferocious argument in behalf of a few brutal generalizations. To the eye cleared of illusions it appears that the ordered life which we call civilization does not exist except on paper. In reality our so-called society is a jungle in which the struggle for existence continues, and must continue, on terms substantially unaltered by legal, moral, or social conventions. The central truth about man is that he is an animal amenable to no law but the law of his own temperament, doing as he desires, subject only to the limitations of his power. The male of the species is characterized by cupidity, pugnacity, and a simian inclination for the

other sex. The female is a soft, vain, pleasure-seeking creature, devoted to personal adornment, and quite helplessly susceptible to the flattery of the male. In the struggles which arise in the jungle through the conflicting appetites of its denizens, the victory goes to the animal most physically fit and mentally ruthless, unless the weaklings, resisting absorption, combine against him and crush him by sheer force of numbers.

Is expressed in his art

The idea that civilization is a sham, Mr. Dreiser sometimes sets forth explicitly, and sometimes he conveys it by the process known among journalists as "coloring the news." When Sister Carrie yields to the seductive drummer, Drouet, Mr. Dreiser judicially weighs the advantages and disadvantages attendant on the condition of being a well-kept mistress. When the institution of marriage is brushed aside by the heroine of *The Financier,* he comments "editorially" as follows: "Before Christianity was man, and after it will also be. A metaphysical idealism will always tell him that it is better to preserve a cleanly balance, and the storms of circumstance will teach him a noble stoicism. Beyond this there is nothing which can reasonably be imposed upon the conscience of man." A little later in the same book he says: "Is there no law outside of the subtle will and power to achieve? If not, it is surely high time that we knew it—one and all. We might then agree to do as we do; but there would be no silly illusion as to divine regulation." His own answer to the question, his own valuation of regulation, both divine and human, may be found in the innumerable contemptuous epithets which fall from his pen whenever he has occasion to mention any power set up against the urge of instinct and the indefinite expansion of desire. Righteousness is always "legal"; conventions are always "current"; routine is always "dull"; respectability is always "unctuous"; an institution for transforming schoolgirls into young ladies is presided over by "owl-like conventionalists"; families in which the parents are faithful to each other lead an "apple-pie order of existence"; a man who yields to his impulses yet condemns himself for yielding is a "rag-bag moralistic ass." Jennie Gerhardt, by a facile surrender of her chastity, shows that *"she could not be*

readily corrupted by the world's selfish lessons on how to preserve oneself from the evil to come." Surely this is "coloring the news."

By similar devices Mr. Dreiser drives home the great truth that man is essentially an animal, impelled by temperament, instinct, physics, chemistry—anything you please that is irrational and uncontrollable. Sometimes he writes an "editorial" paragraph in which the laws of human life are explained by reference to the behavior of certain protozoa or by reference to a squid and a lobster fighting in an aquarium. His heroes and heroines have "cat-like eyes," "feline grace," "sinuous strides," eyes and jaws which vary "from those of the tiger, lynx, and bear to those of the fox, the tolerant mastiff, and the surly bulldog." One hero and his mistress are said to "have run together temperamentally like two leopards." The lady in question, admiring the large rapacity of her mate, exclaims playfully: "Oh, you big tiger! you great, big lion! Boo!" Courtship as presented in these novels is after the manner of beasts in the jungle. Mr. Dreiser's leonine men but circle once or twice about their prey, and spring, and pounce; and the struggle is over. A pure-minded serving-maid, who is suddenly held up in the hall by a "hairy, axiomatic" guest and "masterfully" kissed upon the lips, may for an instant be "horrified, stunned, *like a bird in the grasp of a cat.*" But we are always assured that "through it all something tremendously vital and insistent" will be speaking to her, and in the end she will not resist the urge of the *élan vital.* I recall no one of the dozens of obliging women in these books who makes any effective resistance when summoned to capitulate. *"The psychology of the human animal,* when confronted by these tangles, these ripping tides of the heart," says the author of *The Titan,* "has little to do with so-called reason or logic." No; as he informs us elsewhere in endless iteration, it is a question of chemistry. It is the "chemistry of her being" (that of the female in question) which rouses to blazing the ordinarily dormant forces of Eugene Witla's sympathies in *The Genius.* If Stephanie Platow is disloyal to her married lover

in *The Titan,* "let no one quarrel" with her. Reason: "She was an unstable chemical compound."

Such is the Dreiserian philosophy.

The naturalistic novelist

By thus eliminating distinctively human motives and making animal instincts the supreme factors in human life, Mr. Dreiser reduces the problem of the novelist to the lowest possible terms. I find myself unable to go with those who admire the powerful reality of his art while deploring the puerility of his philosophy. His philosophy quite excludes him from the field in which the great realist must work. He has deliberately rejected the novelist's supreme task—understanding and presenting the development of character; he has chosen only to illustrate the unrestricted flow of temperament. He has evaded the enterprise of representing human conduct; he has confined himself to a representation of animal behavior. He demands for the demonstration of his theory a moral vacuum from which the obligations of parenthood, marriage, chivalry, and citizenship have been quite withdrawn or locked in a twilight sleep. At each critical moment in his narrative, where a realist like George Eliot or Thackeray or Trollope or Meredith would be asking how a given individual would feel, think, and act under the manifold combined stresses of organized society, Mr. Dreiser sinks supinely back upon the law of the jungle or mutters his mystical gibberish about an alteration of the chemical formula.

The possibility of making the unvarying victoriousness of jungle-motive plausible depends directly upon the suppression of the evidence of other motives. In this work of suppression Mr. Dreiser simplifies American life almost beyond recognition. Whether it is because he comes from Indiana, or whether it is because he steadily envisages the human animal, I cannot say; I can only note that he never speaks of his men and women as "educated" or "brought up." Whatever their social status, they are invariably "raised." Raising human stock in America evidently includes feeding and clothing it, but does not include the inculcation of even the most elementary moral ideas. Hence Mr. Dreiser's field seems curiously outside American society. Yet he repeatedly informs us

that his persons are typical of the American middle class, and three of the leading figures, to judge from their names—Carrie Meeber, Jennie Gerhardt, and Eugene Witla—are of our most highly "cultured" race. Frank Cowperwood, the hero of two novels, is a hawk of finance and a rake almost from the cradle; but of the powers which presided over his cradle we know nothing save that his father was a competent officer in a Philadelphia bank. What, if anything, Carrie Meeber's typical American parents taught her about the conduct of life is suppressed; for we meet the girl in a train to Chicago, on which she falls to the first drummer who accosts her. From the bosom of a typical middle-class American family, Eugene Witla emerges in his teens with a knowledge of the game called post-office, takes the train for Chicago, and without hesitation enters upon his long career of seduction. Jennie Gerhardt, of course, succumbs to the first man who puts his arm around her; but, in certain respects, her case is exceptional.

Jennie Gerhardt

In *Jennie Gerhardt* Mr. Dreiser ventures a disastrous experiment at making the jungle-motive plausible without suppressing the evidence of other motives. He provides the girl with pious Lutheran parents, of fallen fortune, but alleged to be of sterling character, who "raise" her with utmost strictness. He even admits that the family were church-goers, and he outlines the doctrine preached by Pastor Wundt: right conduct in marriage and absolute innocence before that state as essentials of Christian living; no salvation for a daughter who failed to keep her chastity unstained, or for the parents who permitted her to fall; Hell yawning for all such; God angry with sinners every day. "Gerhardt and his wife, and also Jennie," says Mr. Dreiser, "accepted the doctrines of their church without reserve." Twenty pages later Jennie is represented as yielding her virtue in pure gratitude to a man of fifty, Senator Brander, who has let her do his laundry and in other ways has been kind to her and her family. The Senator suddenly dies; Jennie expects to become a mother; Father Gerhardt is broken-hearted; and the family moves from Columbus to Cleveland. The first episode is perhaps not altogether incredibly presented as a momen-

tary triumph of emotional impulse over training—as an "accident." The incredible appears when Mr. Dreiser insists that an accident of this sort to a girl brought up in the conditions stated is not necessarily followed by any sense of sin or shame or regret. Upon this simple pious Lutheran he imposes his own naturalistic philosophy, and, in analyzing her psychology before the birth of her illegitimate child, pretends that she looks forward to the event "without a murmur," with "serene, unfaltering courage," "the marvel of life holding her in a trance," "with joy and satisfaction," seeing in her state "the immense possibilities of racial fulfilment." This juggling is probably expected to prepare us for her instantaneous assent, perhaps a year later, when a healthy magnetic manufacturer, who has seen her perhaps a dozen times, claps his paw upon her and says, "You belong to me," and in a perfectly cold-blooded interview, proposes the terms on which he will set her up in New York as his mistress. Jennie, who is a fond mother and a dutiful daughter, goes to her pious Lutheran mother and talks the whole matter over with her quite candidly. The mother hesitates—not on Jennie's account, gentle reader, but because she will be obliged to deceive old Gerhardt; "the difficulty of telling this lie was very great for Mrs. Gerhardt"! But she acquiesces at last. "I'll help you out with it," she concludes—"with a little sigh." The unreality of the whole transaction shrieks.

Encore

Mr. Dreiser's stubborn insistence upon the jungle-motive results in a dreary monotony in the form and substance of his novels. Interested only in the description of animal behavior, he constructs his plot in such a way as to exhibit the persistence of two or three elementary instincts through every kind of situation. He finds, for example, a subject in the career of an American captain of industry, thinly disguised under the name of Frank Cowperwood. He has just two things to tell us about Cowperwood: that he has a rapacious appetite for money; and that he has a rapacious appetite for women. In *The Financier* he "documents" these truths about Cowperwood in seventy-four chapters, in each of which he shows us how his hero made

money or how he captivated women in Philadelphia. Not satisfied with the demonstration, he returns to the same thesis in *The Titan,* and shows us in sixty-two chapters how the same hero made money and captivated women in Chicago and in New York. He promises us a third volume, in which we shall no doubt learn in a work of sixty or seventy chapters—a sort of huge club-sandwich composed of slices of business alternating with erotic episodes—how Frank Cowperwood made money and captivated women in London. Meanwhile Mr. Dreiser has turned aside from his great "trilogy of desire" to give us *The Genius,* in which the hero, Witla, alleged to be a great realistic painter, exhibits in 100 chapters similarly sandwiched together, an appetite for women and money indistinguishable from that of Cowperwood. Read one of these novels and you have read them all. What the hero is in the first chapter, he remains in the one hundred and first and the one hundred and thirty-sixth. He acquires naught from his experiences but sensations. In the sum of his experience there is nothing of the impressive mass and coherence of activities bound together by principles and integrated in character, for all his days have been but as isolated beads loosely strung on the thread of his desire. And so after the production of the hundredth document in the case of Frank Cowperwood, one is ready to cry with fatigue: "Hold! Enough! We believe you. Yes, it is very clear that Frank Cowperwood had a rapacious appetite for women and for money."

Certified reality

If at this point you stop and inquire why Mr. Dreiser goes to such great lengths to establish so little, you find yourself once more confronting the jungle-motive. Mr. Dreiser, with a problem similar to De Foe's in *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal,* has availed himself of De Foe's method for creating the illusion of reality. The essence of the problem for both these authors is the certification of the unreal by the irrelevant. If you wish to make acceptable to your reader the incredible notion that Mrs. Veal's ghost appeared to Mrs. Bargrave divert his incredulity from the precise point at issue by telling him all sorts of detailed cred-

ible things about the poverty of Mrs. Veal's early life, the sobriety of her brother, her father's neglect, and the bad temper of Mrs. Bargrave's husband. If you wish to make acceptable to your reader the incredible notion that Aileen Butler's first breach of the seventh article in the decalogue was "a happy event," taking place "much as a marriage might have," divert his incredulity by describing with the technical accuracy of a fashion magazine not merely the gown she wore on the night of Cowperwood's reception, but also with equal detail the half-dozen other gowns that she thought she might wear, but did not. If you have been for three years editor-in-chief of the Butterick publications you can probably persuade your readers that you are a master of the subject, and having acquired credit for expert knowledge in matters of dress and millinery, you can now and then emit unchallenged a bit of philosophy such as "Life cannot be put in any one mold, and the attempt may as well be abandoned at once. . . . Besides, whether we will or not, theory or no theory, the large basic facts of chemistry and physics remain." None the less, if you expect to gain credence for the notion that your hero can have any woman in Chicago or New York that he puts his paw upon, you had probably better lead up to it by a detailed account of the street-railway system in those cities. It will necessitate the loading of your pages with a tremendous baggage of irrelevant detail. It will not sound much like the fine art of fiction. It will sound more like one of Lincoln Steffens's special articles. But it will produce an overwhelming impression of reality, which the reader will carry with him into the next chapter where you are laying bare the "chemistry" of the human animal.

Realism and naturalism

It would make for clearness in our discussions of contemporary fiction if we withheld the title of "realist" from a writer like Mr. Dreiser, and called him, as Zola called himself, a "naturalist." While asserting that all great art in every period intends a representation of reality, I have tried to indicate the basis for a working distinction between the realistic novel and the naturalistic novel of the present day. Both are representations of the life of

man in contemporary or nearly contemporary society, and both are presumably composed of materials within the experience and observation of the author. But the realistic novel is a representation based upon a theory of human conduct. If the theory of human conduct is adequate, the representation constitutes an addition to literature and to social history. A naturalistic novel is a representation based upon a theory of animal behavior. Since a theory of animal behavior can never be an adequate basis for a representation of the life of man in contemporary society, such a representation is an artistic blunder. When half the world attempts to assert such a theory, the other half rises in battle. And so one turns with relief from Mr. Dreiser's novels to the morning papers.

O. HENRY

By O. W. FIRKINS

There are two opinions concerning O. Henry. The middle class views him as the impersonation of vigor and brilliancy; part of the higher criticism sees in him little but sensation and persiflage. Between these views there is a natural relation; the gods of the heathens are *ipso facto* the demons of Christianty. Unmixed assertions, however, are commonly mixtures of truth and falsehood; there is room today for an estimate which shall respect both opinions and adopt neither.

A designer of stories

There is one literary trait in which I am unable to name any writer of tales in any literature who surpasses O. Henry.[1] It is not primary or even secondary among literary merits; it is less a value *per se* than the condition or foundation of values. But its utility is manifest, and it is rare among men: Chaucer and Shakespeare prove the possibility of its absence in masters of that very branch of art in which its presence would seem to be imperative. I refer to the designing of stories—not to the primary intuition or to skill in development, in both of which finer phases of invention O. Henry has been largely and frequently

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Mr. O. W. Firkins, professor of comparative literature in the University of Minnesota and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, is known particularly as a critic of poetry and the drama. He published *Emerson* in 1915, and *Jane Austen* in 1920.

[1]William Sidney Porter, 1862-1910, son of Algernon Sidney Porter, physician, was born, bred, and meagrely educated in Greensboro, North Carolina. In Greensboro he was drug clerk; in Texas he was amateur ranchman, land-office clerk, editor, and bank teller. Convicted of misuse of bank funds on insufficient evidence (which he supplemented by the insanity of flight), he passed three years and three months in the Ohio State Penitentiary at Columbus. Release was the prelude to life in New York, to story-writing, to rapid and wide-spread fame. Latterly, his stories, published in New York journals and in book form, were consumed by the public with an avidity which his premature death, in 1910, scarcely checked. The pen-name, O. Henry, is almost certainly borrowed from a French chemist, Etienne Ossian Henry, whose abridged name he fell upon in his pharmacal researches. See the interesting *O. Henry Biography* by C. Alphonso Smith and the Greensboro *Daily News* for July 2, 1919.

surpassed, but to the disposition of masses, to the blocking-out of plots. That a half-educated American provincial should have been original in a field in which original men have been copyists is enough of itself to make his personality observable.

Illustration, even of conceded truths, is rarely superfluous. I supply two instances. Two lads, parting in New York, agree to meet "After Twenty Years" at a specified hour, date, and corner. Both are faithful; but the years in which their relation has slept in mutual silence and ignorance have turned the one into a dashing criminal, the other into a sober officer of the law. Behind the picturesque and captivating rendezvous lurks a powerful dramatic situation and a moral problem of arresting gravity. This is dealt with in six pages of the *Four Million*. The "Furnished Room," two stories further on, occupies twelve pages. Through the wilderness of apartments on the lower West Side a man trails a woman. Chance leads him to the very room in which the woman ended her life the week before. Between him and the truth the avarice of a sordid landlady interposes the curtain of a lie. In the bed in which the girl slept and died, the man sleeps and dies, and the entrance of the deadly fumes into his nostrils shuts the sinister and mournful coincidence forever from the knowledge of mankind. O. Henry gave these tales neither extension nor prominence; so far as I know, they were received without bravos or salvos. The distinction of a body of work in which such specimens are undistinguished hardly requires comment.

Types of O. Henry stories

A few types among these stories may be specified. There are the Sydney Cartonisms, defined in the name; love-stories in which divided hearts or simply divided persons, are brought together by the strategy of chance; hoax stories—deft pictures of smiling roguery; "prince and pauper" stories, in which wealth and poverty face each other, sometimes enact each other; disguise stories, in which the wrong clothes often draw the wrong bullets; complemental stories, in which Jim sacrifices his beloved watch to buy combs for Della, who, meanwhile, has

sacrificed her beloved hair to buy a chain for Jim.

This imperfect list is eloquent in its way; it smooths our path to the assertion that O. Henry's specialty is the enlistment of original method in the service of traditional appeals. The ends are the ends of fifty years ago; O. Henry transports us by aeroplane to the old homestead.[1]

Inventions and improbabilities

Criticism of O. Henry falls into those superlatives and antitheses in which his own faculty delighted. In mechanical invention he is almost the leader of his race. In a related quality—a defect—his leadership is even more conspicuous. I doubt if the sense of the probable, or, more precisely, of the available in the improbable, ever became equally weakened or deadened in a man who made his living by its exercise. The improbable, even the impossible, has its place in art, though that place is relatively low; and it is curious that works such as the *Arabian Nights* and Grimm's fairy tales, whose stock-in-trade is the incredible, are the works which give almost no trouble on the score of verisimilitude. The truth is that we reject not what it is impossible to prove, or even what it is possible to disprove, but what it is impossible to imagine. O. Henry asks us to imagine the unimaginable—that is his crime.

The right and wrong improbabilities may be illustrated from two burglar stories. "Sixes and Sevens," contains an excellent tale of a burglar and a citizen who fraternize, in a comic midnight interview, on the score of their common sufferings from rheumatism. This feeling in practice would not triumph over fear and greed; but the feeling is natural, and everybody with a grain of nature in him can imagine its triumph. Nature tends towards that impossibility, and art, lifting, so to speak, the lid which fact drops upon nature, reveals nature in belying fact. In another story, in *Whirligigs,* a nocturnal interview takes place in which a burglar and a small boy discuss

[1]O. Henry's stories have been known to coincide with earlier work in a fashion which dims the novelty of the tale without clouding the originality of the author. I thought the brilliant "Harlem Tragedy" (in the *Trimmed Lamp*) unique through sheer audacity, but the other day I found its motive repeated with singular exactness in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (Letter li).

the etiquette of their mutual relation by formulas derived from short stories with which both are amazingly conversant. This is the wrong use of the improbable. Even an imagination inured to the virtues of burglars and the maturity of small boys will have naught to do with this insanity.

But O. Henry can go further yet. There are inventions in his tales the very utterance of which—not the mere substance but the utterance—on the part of a man not writing from Bedlam or for Bedlam impresses the reader as incredible. In a "Comedy in Rubber," two persons become so used to spectatorship at transactions in the street that they drift into the part of spectators when the transaction is their own wedding. Can human daring or human folly go further? O. Henry is on the spot to prove that they can. In the "Romance of a Busy Broker," a busy and forgetful man, in a freak of absent-mindedness, offers his hand to the stenographer whom he had married the night before.

The other day, in the journal of the Goncourts, I came upon the following sentence: "Never will the imagination approach the improbabilities and the antitheses of truth" (11, 9). This is dated February 21, 1862. Truth had still the advantage. O. Henry was not born till September of the same year.

Style of O. Henry

Passing on to style, we are still in the land of antithesis. The style is gross—and fine. Of the plenitude of its stimulus, there can be no question. In "Sixes and Sevens," a young man sinking under accidental morphia, is kept awake and alive by shouts, kicks and blows. O. Henry's public seems imaged in that young man. But I draw a sharp distinction between the *tone* of the style and its *pattern*. The tone is brazen, or, better perhaps, brassy; its self-advertisement is incorrigible; it reeks with the air of *performance* which is opposed to real efficiency. But the pattern is another matter. The South rounds its periods like its vowels; O. Henry has read, not widely, but wisely, in his boyhood. His sentences are *built*—a rare thing in the best writers of today. In conciseness, that Spartan virtue, he was strong, though it must be confessed that the tale-teller was now and

then hustled from the rostrum by his rival and enemy, the talker. He can introduce a felicity with a noiselessness that numbers him for a flying second among the sovereigns of English. "In one of the second-floor front windows Mrs. McCaskey awaited her husband. Supper was cooling on the table. Its heat went into Mrs. McCaskey."

I regret the tomfoolery; I wince at the slang. Yet even for these levities with which his pages are so liberally besprinkled or bedaubed, some half-apology may be circumspectly urged. In nonsense his ease is consummate. A horseman who should dismount to pick up a bauble would be childish; O. Henry picks it up without dismounting. Slang, again, is most pardonable in the man with whom its use is least exclusive and least necessary. There are men who, going for a walk, take their dogs with them; there are other men who give a walk to their dogs. Substitute slang for the dog, and the superiority of the first class to the second will exactly illustrate the superiority of O. Henry to the abject traffickers in slang.

In the "Pendulum" Katy has a new patch in her crazy quilt which the ice man cut from the end of his four-in-hand. In the "Day We Celebrate," threading the mazes of a banana grove is compared to "paging the palm room of a New York hotel for a man named Smith." O. Henry's is the type of mind to which images like this four-in-hand and this palm room are presented in exhaustless abundance and unflagging continuity. There was hardly an object in the merry-go-round of civilized life that had not offered at least an end or an edge to the avidity of his consuming eyes. Nothing escapes from the besom of his allusiveness, and the style is streaked and pied, almost to monotony, by the accumulation of lively details.

If O. Henry's style was crude, it was also rare; but it is part of the grimness of the bargain that destiny drives with us that the mixture of the crude and the rare should be a crude mixture, as the sons of whites and negroes are numbered with the blacks. In the kingdom of style O. Henry's estates were princely, but, to pay his debts, he must have sold them all.

Thus far in our inquiry extraordinary merits have been offset by extraordinary defects. To lift our author out of the class of brilliant and skillful entertainers, more is needed. Is more forthcoming? I should answer, yes. In O. Henry, above the knowledge of setting, which is clear and first-hand, but subsidiary, above the order of events, which is, generally speaking, fantastic, above the emotions, which are sound and warm, but almost purely derivative, there is a rather small, but impressive body of first-hand perspicacities and reactions. On these his endurance may hinge.

Original insights and responses

I name, first of all, O. Henry's feeling for New York. With the exception of his New Orleans, I care little for his South and West, which are a boyish South and West, and as little, or even less, for his Spanish-American communities. My objection to his opera-bouffe republics is, not that they are inadequate as republics (for that we were entirely prepared), but that they are inadequate as opera. He lets us see his show from the coulisses. The pretense lacks standing even among pretenses, and a faith must be induced before its removal can enliven us. But his New York has quality. It is of the family of Dickens' London and Hugo's Paris, though it is plainly a cadet in the family. Mr. Howells, in his profound and valuable study of the metropolis in *A Hazard of New Fortunes,* is penetrating; O. Henry, on the other hand, is *penetrated.* His New York is intimate and clinging; it is caught in the mesh of the imagination.

O. Henry had rare but precious insights into human destiny and human nature. In these pictures he is not formally accurate; he could never or seldom set his truth before us in that moderation and proportion which truths acquire in the stringencies of actuality. He was apt to present his insight in a sort of parable or allegory, to upraise it before the eyes of mankind on the mast or flagpole of some vehement exaggeration. Epigram shows us truth in the embrace of a lie, and tales which are dramatized epigrams are subject to a like constraint. The force, however, is real. I could scarcely name anywhere a more powerful exposition

Use of parable

of fatality than "Roads of Destiny," the initial story in the volume which appropriates its title. It wanted only the skilled romantic touch of a Gautier or Stevenson to enroll this tale among the masterpieces of its kind in contemporary letters.

Rejection of plot

Now and then the ingredient of parable is hardly perceptible; we draw close to the bare fact. O. Henry, fortunate in plots, is peculiarly fortunate in his renunciation of plot. If contrivance is lucrative, it is also costly. There is an admirable little story called the "Pendulum" (in the *Trimmed Lamp*), the simplicity of whose fable would have satisfied Coppée or Hawthorne. A man in a flat, by force of custom, has come to regard his wife as a piece of furniture. She departs for a few hours, and, by the break in usage, is restored, in his consciousness, to womanhood. She comes back, and relapses into furniture. That is all. O. Henry could not have given us less—or more. Farcical, clownish, if you will, the story resembles those clowns who carry daggers under their motley. When John Perkins takes up that inauspicious hat, the reader smiles, and quails. I will mention a few other examples of insights with the proviso that they are not specially commended to the man whose quest in the short story is the electrifying or the calorific. They include the "Social Triangle," the "Making of a New Yorker," and the "Foreign Policy of Company 99," all in the *Trimmed Lamp,* the "Brief Début of Tildy" in the *Four Million,* and the "Complete Life of John Hopkins" in the *Voice of the City.* I can not close this summary of good points without a passing reference to the not unsuggestive portrayal of humane and cheerful scoundrels in the *Gentle Grafter.* The picture, if false to species, is faithful to genus.

O. Henry's egregiousness, on the superficial side, both in merits and defects, reminds us of those park benches so characteristic of his tales which are occupied by a millionaire at one end and a mendicant at the other. But, to complete the image, we must add as a casual visitor to that bench a seer or a student, who, sitting down between the previous comers and suspending the flamboyancies of their dialogue, should gaze

with the pensive eye of Goldsmith or Addison upon the passing crowd.

Modern form with traditional spirit

In O. Henry American journalism and the Victorian tradition meet. His mind, quick to don the guise of modernity, was impervious to its spirit. The specifically modern movements, the scientific awakening, the religious upheaval and subsidence, the socialistic gospel, the enfranchisement of women—these never interfered with his artless and joyous pursuit of the old romantic motives of love, hate, wealth, poverty, gentility, disguise, and crime. On two points a moral record which, in his literature, is everywhere sound and stainless, rises almost to nobility. In an age when sexual excitement had become available and permissible, this worshiper of stimulus never touched with so much as a fingertip that insidious and meretricious fruit. The second point is his feeling for underpaid working-girls. His passionate concern for this wrong derives a peculiar emphasis from the general refusal of his books to bestow countenance or notice on philanthropy in its collective forms. When, in his dream of Heaven, he is asked: "Are you one of the bunch?" (meaning one of the bunch of grasping and grinding employers) the response, through all its slang, is soul-stirring. " 'Not on your immortality,' said I. 'I'm only the fellow that set fire to an orphan asylum and murdered a blind man for his pennies'." The author of that retort may have some difficulty with the sentries that watch the entrance of Parnassus; he will have none with the gatekeeper of the New Jerusalem.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

By JAMES GIBBONS HUNEKER

Two decades ago, more or less, John M. Robertson published several volumes chiefly concerned with the gentle art of criticism. Mr. Robertson introduced to the English-reading world the critical theories of Emile Hennequin, whose essays on Poe, Dostoievsky, and Turgenieff may be remembered. It is a cardinal doctrine of Hennequin and Robertson that, as the personal element plays the chief role in everything the critic writes, he himself should be the first to submit to a grilling; in a word, to be put through his paces and tell us in advance of his likes and dislikes, his prejudices and passions. Naturally, it doesn't take long to discover the particular bias of a critic's mind. He writes himself down whenever he puts pen to paper.

Critical bias

For instance, there is the historic duel between Anatole France, a free-lance among critics, and Ferdinand Brunetière, intrenched behind the bastions of tradition, not to mention the *Revue des Deux Mondes.* That discussion, while amusing, was so much threshing of academic straw. M. France disclaimed all authority—he, most erudite among critics; M. Brunetière praised impersonality in criticism—he, the most personal among writers—not a pleasing or expansive personality, be it understood; but, narrow as he was, his personality shone out from every page.

Now, says Mr. Robertson, why not ask every critic about to bring forth an opinion for a sort of chart on which will be shown his various qualities of mind, character; yes, and even his physical temperament; whether sanguine or melancholic, bilious or eupeptic, young or old, peaceful or truculent; also his tastes in literature, art, music, politics, and religion. This reminds one of an old-fashioned game. And all this long-winded preamble is to tell you that the case of Arnold Schoenberg, musical anarchist, and an Austrian composer who

From *Ivory Apes and Peacocks* (1915), by special permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons. See note on "Brahmsody," p. 352.

has at once aroused the ire and admiration of musical Germany, demands just such a confession from a critic about to hold in the balance the music or unmusic (the Germans have such a handy word) of Schoenberg. Therefore, before I attempt a critical or uncritical valuation of the art of Arnold Schoenberg let me make a clean breast of my prejudices in the manner suggested by Hennequin and Robertson. Besides, it is a holy and unwholesome idea to purge the mind every now and then.

Huneker confesses

First: I place pure music above impure, *i. e.,* instrumental above mixed. I dislike grand opera as a miserable mishmash of styles, compromises, and arrant ugliness. The moment the human voice intrudes in an orchestral work, my dream-world of music vanishes. Mother Church is right in banishing from within the walls of her temples the female voice. The world, the flesh, and the devil lurk in the larynx of the soprano or alto, and her place is before the footlights, not as a vocal staircase to paradise. I say this, knowing in my heart that nothing is so thrilling as Tristan and Isolde, and my memory-cells hold marvellous pictures of Lilli Lehmann, Milka Ternina, and Olive Fremstad. So, I'm neither logical nor sincere; nevertheless, I maintain the opinion that absolute music, not programme, not music-drama, is the apogee of the art. A Beethoven string quartet holds more genuine music for me than the entire works of Wagner. There's a prejudiced statement for you!

Second: I fear and dislike the music of Arnold Schoenberg, who may be called the Max Stirner of music. Now, the field being cleared, let us see what the music of the new man is like. Certainly, he is the hardest musical nut to crack of his generation, and the shell is very bitter in the mouth.

Early in December, 1912, the fourth performance of a curious composition by Schoenberg was given at the Choralionsaal in the Bellevue-strasse, Berlin. The work is entitled Lieder des Pierrot Lunaire, the text of which is a fairly good translation of a poem cycle by Albert Guiraud. This translation was made by the late Otto Erich Hartleben, himself a poet and dramatist. I have not read the original

French verse, but the idea seems to be faithfully represented in the German version. This moon-stricken Pierrot chants—rather declaims—his woes and occasional joys to the music of the Viennese composer, whose score requires a reciter (female), a piano, flute (also piccolo), clarinet (also bass clarinet), violin (also viola), and violoncello. The piece is described as a melodrama. I listened to it on a Sunday morning, and I confess that Sunday at noon is not a time propitious to the mood musical. It was also the first time I had heard a note of Schoenberg's. In vain I had tried to get some of his scores; not even the six little piano pieces could I secure. Instead, my inquiries were met with dubious or pitying smiles —your music clerk is a terrible critic betimes, and his mind oft takes upon it the colour of his customer's orders. So there I was, to be pitched overboard into a new sea, to sink or float, and all the while wishing myself miles away.

A lady of pleasing appearance, attired in a mollified Pierrot costume, stood before some Japanese screens and began to intone—to cantillate, would be a better expression. She told of a monstrous moon-drunken world, then she described Columbine, a dandy, a pale washer-woman—"Eine blasse Wäscherin wäscht zur Nachtzeit bleiche Tücher"—and always with a refrain, for Guiraud employs the device to excess. A valse of Chopin followed, in verse, of course (poor suffering Frederic!), and part one—there are seven poems, each in three sections—ended with one entitled Madonna, and another, the Sick Moon. The musicians were concealed behind the screens (dear old Mark Twain would have said, to escape the outraged audience), but we heard them only too clearly!

It is the decomposition of the art, I thought, as I held myself in my seat. Of course, I meant decomposition of tones, as the slang of the ateliers goes.

Effects of Schoenberg's music

What did I hear? At first, the sound of delicate china shivering into a thousand luminous fragments. In the welter of tonalities that bruised each other as they passed and repassed, in the preliminary grip of enharmonics that almost made the ears bleed, the eyes water, the scalp to freeze, I could not get a central

grip on myself. It was new music (or new exquisitely horrible sounds) with a vengeance. The very ecstasy of the hideous! I say "exquisitely horrible," for pain can be at once exquisite and horrible; consider toothache and its first cousin, neuralgia. And the border-land between pain and pleasure is a territory hitherto unexplored by musical composers. Wagner suggests poetic anguish; Schoenberg not only arouses the image of anguish, but he brings it home to his auditory in the most subjective way. You suffer the anguish with the fictitious character in the poem. Your nerves—and remember the porches of the ears are the gateways to the brain and ganglionic centres—are literally pinched and scraped.

I wondered that morning if I were not in a nervous condition. I looked about me in the sparsely filled hall. People didn't wriggle; perhaps their souls wriggled. They neither smiled nor wept. Yet on the wharf of hell the lost souls disembarked and wept and lamented. What was the matter with my own ego? My conscience reported a clean bill of health, I had gone to bed early the previous night wishing to prepare for the ordeal. Evidently I was out of condition (critics are like prize-fighters, they must keep in constant training else they go "stale"). Or was the music to blame? Schoenberg is, I said to myself, the cruelest of all composers, for he mingles with his music sharp daggers at white heat, with which he pares away tiny slices of his victim's flesh. Anon he twists the knife in the fresh wound and you receive another horrible thrill, all the time wondering over the fate of the Lunar Pierrot and—hold on! Here's the first clew. If this new music is so distractingly atrocious what right has a listener to bother about Pierrot? What's Pierrot to him or he to Pierrot? Perhaps Schoenberg had caught his fish in the musical net he used, and what more did he want, or what more could his listeners expect?—for to be hooked or netted by the stronger volition of an artist is the object of all the seven arts.

How does Schoenberg do it? How does he pull off the trick? It is not a question to be lightly answered. In the first place the personality of the listener is bound to obtrude

itself; dissociation from one's ego—if such a thing were possible—would be intellectual death; only by the clear, persistent image of ourselves do we exist—banal psychology as old as the hills. And the ear, like the eye, soon "accommodates" itself to new perspectives and unrelated harmonies.

I had felt, without clearly knowing the reason, that when Albertine Zehme so eloquently declaimed the lines of Madonna, the sixth stanza of part one, beginning "Steig, o Mutter aller Schmerzen, auf den Altar meiner Töne!" that the background of poignant noise supplied by the composer was more than apposite, and in the mood-key of the poem. The flute, bass clarinet, and violoncello were so cleverly handled that the colour of the doleful verse was enhanced, the mood expanded; perhaps the Hebraic strain in the composer's blood has endowed him with the gift of expressing sorrow and desolation and the abomination of living. How far are we here from the current notion that music is a consoler, is joy-breeding, or should, according to the Aristotelian formula, purge the soul through pity and terror. I felt the terror, but pity was absent. Blood-red clouds swept over vague horizons. It was a new land through which I wandered. And so it went on to the end, and I noted as we progressed that Schoenberg, despite his ugly sounds, was master of more than one mood; witness the shocking cynicism of the gallows song Die dürre Dirne mit langen Halse. Such music is shameful—"and that's the precise effect I was after"—could the composer triumphantly answer, and he would be right. What kind of music is this, without melody, in the ordinary sense; without themes, yet every acorn of a phrase contrapuntally developed by an adept; without a harmony that does not smite the ears, lacerate, figuratively speaking, the ear-drums; keys forced into hateful marriage that are miles asunder, or else too closely related for aural matrimony; no form, that is, in the scholastic formal sense, and rhythms that are so persistently varied as to become monotonous—what kind of music, I repeat, is this that can paint a "crystal sigh," the blackness of prehistoric night, the abysm of a morbid soul, the man in the moon, the faint sweet odours of an impossible

Moods

fairy-land, and the strut of the dandy from Bergamo? (See the Guiraud poem.) There is no melodic or harmonic line, only a series of points, dots, dashes, or phrases that rob and scream, despair, explode, exalt, blaspheme.

I give the conundrum the go-by; I only know that when I finally surrendered myself to the composer he worked his will on my fancy and on my raw nerves, and I followed the poems, loathing the music all the while, with intense interest. Indeed, I couldn't let go the skein of the story for fear that I might fall off somewhere into gloomy chasm and be devoured by chromatic wolves. I recalled one extraordinary moment at the close of the composition when a simple major chord was sounded and how to my ears it had a supernal beauty; after the perilous tossing and pitching on a treacherous sea of no-harmonies it was like a field of firm ice under the feet.

I told myself that it served me right, that I was too old to go gallivanting around with this younger generation, that if I would eat prickly musical pears I must not be surprised if I suffered from aural colic. Nevertheless, when certain of the Schoenberg compositions reached me from Vienna I eagerly fell to studying them. I saw then that he had adopted as his motto: Evil, be thou my good! And that a man who could portray in tone sheer ugliness with such crystal clearness is to be reckoned with in these topsyturvy times.

I have called Arnold Schoenberg a musical anarchist, using the word in its best estate—anarchos, without a head. Perhaps he is a superman also, and the world doesn't know it. His admirers and pupils think so, however, and several of them have recorded their opinion in a little book, published at Munich, 1912, by R. Piper & Co.

Biographical items

The life of Arnold Schoenberg, its outer side, has thus far been uneventful, though doubtless rich in the psychical sense. He is still young, born in Vienna, September 13, 1874. He lived there till 1901, then in the December of that year he went to Berlin, where he was for a short time conductor in Wolzogen's Bunten Theatre, and also teacher of composition at Stern's Conservatory. In

1903 he returned to Vienna, where he taught—he is preeminently a pedagogue, even pedantic as I hope to presently prove—in the K. K. Akademie für Musik. In 1911 Berlin again beckoned to him, and as hope ever burns in the bosom of composers, young and old, he no doubt believes that his day will come. Certainly, his disciples, few as they may be, make up by their enthusiasm for the public and critical flouting. I can't help recalling the Italian Futurists when I think of Schoenberg. The same wrath may be noted in the galleries where the young Italian painters exhibit. So it was at the end of the concert. One man, a sane person, was positively purple with rage (evidently he had paid for his seat), and swore that the composer was verrückt.

His compositions are not numerous. Schoenberg appears to be a reflective rather than a spontaneous creator. Here is an abridged list: Opus 1, 2, and 3 (composed, 1898-1900); Opus 4, string sextet, which bears the title, Verklärte Nacht (1899); Gurrelieder, after J. P. Jacobsen, for solos; chorus and orchestra (1900), published in the Universal Edition, Vienna; Opus 5, Pelléas et Mélisande, symphonic poem for orchestra (1902), Universal Edition aforesaid; Opus 6, eight lieder (about 1905); Opus 7, E string quartet, D minor (1905); Opus 8, six orchestral lieder (1904); Opus 9, Kammer-symphonie (1906); two ballads for voice and piano (1907); Peace on Earth, mixed chorus a capella (1908), manuscript; Opus 10, II, string quartet, F-sharp minor (1907-8); fifteen lieder, after Stefan George, a talented Viennese poet, one of the Jung-Wien group (1908), manuscript; Opus 11, three piano pieces (1908); five pieces for orchestra (1909) in the Peters Edition; monodrama, Erwartung (1909); Glückliche Hand, drama with music, text by composer, not yet finished (1910); and six piano pieces (1911). His book on harmony appeared in 1910 and was universally treated as the production of a madman, and, finally, as far as this chronicle goes, in 1911-12 he finished Pierrot Lunaire, which was first produced in Berlin.

One thing is certain, and this hardly need assure my musical readers, the old tonal order has changed for ever; there are plenty of signs in the musical firmament to prove this. Moussorgsky preceded Debussy in his use of whole-tone harmonies, and a contemporary of Debussy, and an equally gifted musician, Martin Loeffler, was experimenting before Debussy himself in a dark but delectable harmonic region. The tyranny of the diatonic and chromatic scales, the tiresome revolutions of the major and minor modes, the critical Canutes who sit at the seaside and say to the modern waves: Thus far and no farther; and then hastily abandon their chairs and rush to safety else be overwhelmed, all these things are of the past, whether in music, art, literature, and—let Nietzsche speak—in ethics. Even philosophy has become a plaything, and logic "a dodge," as Professor Jowett puts it. Every stronghold is being assailed, from the "divine" rights of property to the common chord of C major. With Schoenberg, freedom in modulation is not only permissible, but is an iron rule; he is obsessed by the theory of overtones, and his music is not only horizontally and vertically planned, but, so I pretend to hear, also in a circular fashion. There is no such thing as consonance or dissonance, only imperfect training of the ear (I am quoting from his Harmony, certainly a bible for musical supermen). He says: "Harmonie fremde Töne gibt es also nicht"—and a sly dig at the old-timers—"sondern nur dem Harmoniesystem fremde." After carefully listening I noted that he too has his mannerisms, that in his chaos there is a certain order, that his madness is very methodical. For one thing he abuses the interval of the fourth, and he enjoys juggling with the chord of the ninth. Vagabond harmonies, in which the remotest keys lovingly hold hands, do not prevent the sensation of a central tonality somewhere—in the cellar, on the roof, in the gutter, up in the sky. The inner ear tells you that the D-minor quartet is really thought, though not altogether played, in that key. As for form, you must not expect it from a man who declares: "I decide my form during composition only through feeling." Every chord is the outcome

The new tonal order

of an emotion, the emotion aroused by the poem or idea which gives birth to the composition. Such antique things as the cyclic form or community of themes are not to be expected in Schoenberg's bright lexicon of anarchy. He boils down the classic form to one movement and, so it seemed to my hearing, he begins developing his idea as soon as it is announced.

Peculiarities of Schoenberg's art

Such polyphony, such interweaving of voices—eleven and twelve and fifteen are a matter of course—as would make envious the old tonal weavers of the Netherlands! There is, literally, no waste ornament or filling in his scores; every theme, every subsidiary figure, is set spinning so that you dream of fireworks spouting in every direction, only the fire is vitriolic and burns the tympani of the ears. Seriously, like all complex effects, the Schoenberg scores soon become legible if scrutinised without prejudice. The string sextet, if compared to the later music, is sunny and Mozartian in its melodic and harmonic simplicity. They tell me that Schoenberg once wrote freely in the normal manner, but finding that he could not attract attention he deliberately set himself to make abnormal music. I don't know how true this may be; the same sort of thing was said of Mallarmé and Paul Cézanne and Richard Strauss, and was absolutely without foundation.

Schoenberg is an autodidact, the lessons in composition from Alexander von Zemlinsky not affecting his future path-breaking propensities. His mission is to free harmony from all rules. A man doesn't hit on such combinations, especially in his acrid instrumentation, without heroic labour. His knowledge must be enormous, for his scores are as logical as a highly wrought mosaic; that is, logical, if you grant him his premises. He is perverse and he wills his music, but he is a master in delineating certain moods, though the means he employs revolt our ears. To call him "crazy," is merely amusing. No man is less crazy, few men are so conscious of what they are doing, and few modern composers boast such a faculty of attention. Concentration is the key-note of his work; concentration—or condensation formal, concen-

tration of thematic material—to the vanishing-point; and conciseness in treatment, although every license is allowed in modulation.

Every composer has his aura; the aura of Arnold Schoenberg is, for me, the aura of subtle ugliness, of hatred and contempt, of cruelty, and of the mystic grandiose. He is never petty. He sins in the grand manner of Nietzsche's Superman, and he has the courage of his chromatics. If such music-making is ever to become accepted, then I long for Death the Releaser. More shocking still would be the suspicion that in time I might be persuaded to like this music, to embrace, after abhorring it.

As for Schoenberg, the painter—he paints, too!—I won't take even the guarded praise of such an accomplished artist as Kandinsky as sufficient evidence. I've not seen any of the composer's "purple cows," and hope I never shall see them. His black-and-white reproductions look pretty bad, and not nearly as original as his music. The portrait of a lady (who seems to be listening to Schoenbergian harmonies) hasn't much colour, a critic tells us, only a sickly rose in her dress. He also paints grey-green landscapes and visions, the latter dug up from the abysmal depths of his subconsciousness. Schoenberg is, at least, the object of considerable curiosity. What he will do next no man may say; but at least it won't be like the work of any one else. The only distinct reminiscence of an older composer that I could discover in his Pierrot was Richard Wagner (toujours Wagner, whether Franck or Humperdinck or Strauss or Debussy), and of him, the first page of the Introduction to the last act of Tristan and Isolde, more the mood than the actual themes. Schoenberg is always atmospheric. So is a tornado. He is the poet whose flowers are evil; he is the spirit that denies; never a realist, like Strauss, ingeniously imitating natural sounds, he may be truthfully described as a musical symbolist.

THE NIGGER OF THE NARCISSUS

By JOSEPH CONRAD

Art and thought

A work that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line. And art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of lfe, what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential—their one illuminating and convincing quality—the very truth of their existence. The artist, then, like the thinker or the scientist, seeks the truth and makes his appeal. Impressed by the aspect of the world the thinker plunges into ideas, the scientist into facts—whence, presently, emerging they make their appeal to those qualities of our being that fit us best for the hazardous enterprise of living. They speak authoritatively to our common-sense, to our intelligence, to our desire of peace or to our desire of unrest; not seldom to our prejudices, sometimes to our fears, often to our egoism—but always to our credulity. And their words are heard with reverence, for their concern is with weighty matters; with the cultivation of our minds and the proper care of our bodies; with the

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Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski was born in 1857 in the Polish province of Ukraine, from which his parents were banished during his boyhood. From 1874 to 1894 Conrad was a sailor, much of the time an officer in the British merchant marine. During the great war he was again aboard a sailing vessel, searching for mines. One who does not yet know this consummate novelist cannot do better than to begin with *Almayer's Folly,* his first book (1895), the scene of which is Borneo. *The Nigger of the Narcissus,* which took the author from his ship only to launch him on the broader sea of imaginative literature, appeared in 1897. *Victory* was published in 1915 and *The Rescue* in 1920, with many volumes of long and of short stories in between. An excellent essay on Conrad will be found in *A Book of Prefaces,* by H. L. Mencken, 1917.

attainment of our ambitions: with the perfection of the means and the glorification of our precious aims.

It is otherwise with the artist.

Confronted by the same enigmatical spectacle the artist descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal. His appeal is made to our less obvious capacities: to that part of our nature which, because of the warlike conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the more resisting and hard qualities—like the vulnerable body within a steel armour. His appeal is less loud, more profound, less distinct, more stirring—and sooner forgotten. Yet its effect endures forever. The changing wisdom of successive generations discards ideas, questions facts, demolishes theories. But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom; to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition—and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives: to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain: to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—and to the subtle but invincible, conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity —the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.

Appeal and method of art

It is only some such train of thought, or rather of feeling, that can in a measure explain the aim of the attempt, made in the tale which follows, to present an unrestful episode in the obscure lives of a few individuals out of all the disregarded multitude of the bewildered, the simple and the voiceless. For, if there is any part of truth in the belief confessed above, it becomes evident that there is not a place of splendour or a dark corner of the earth that does not deserve, if only a passing glance of wonder and pity. The motive, then, may be held to justify the matter of the work; but this pref-

ace, which is simply an avowal of endeavour, cannot end here —for the avowal is not yet complete.

Fiction as art

Fiction—if it at all aspires to be art—appeals to temperament. And in truth it must be, like painting, like music, like all art, the appeal of one temperament to all the other innumerable temperaments whose subtle and resistless power endows passing events with their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time. Such an appeal to be effective must be an impression conveyed through the senses; and, in fact, it cannot be made in any other way, because temperament, whether individual or collective, is not amenable to persuasion. All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. It must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music—which is the art of arts. And it is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour; and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage.

Prose fiction to make us see

The sincere endeavour to accomplish that creative task, to go as far on that road as his strength will carry him, to go undeterred by faltering, weariness or reproach, is the only valid justification for the worker in prose. And if his conscience is clear, his answer to those who, in the fulness of a wisdom which looks for immediate profit, demand specifically to be edified, consoled, amused; who demand to be promptly improved, or encouraged, or frightened, or shocked, or charmed, must run thus:—My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*.

That—and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.

The novelist's task

To snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing phase of life, is only the beginning of the task. The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes and in the light of a sincere mood. It is to show its vibration, its colour, its form; and through its movement, its form, and its colour, reveal the substance of its truth—disclose its inspiring secret: the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment. In a single-minded attempt of that kind, if one be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world.

No single formula suffices

It is evident that he who, rightly or wrongly, holds by the convictions expressed above cannot be faithful to any one of the temporary formulas of his craft. The enduring part of them—the truth which each only imperfectly veils—should abide with him as the most precious of his possessions, but they all: Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, even the unofficial sentimentalism (which like the poor, is exceedingly diffcult to get rid of) all these gods must, after a short period of fellowship, abandon him—even on the very threshold of the temple—to the stammerings of his conscience and to the outspoken consciousness of the difficulties of his work. In that uneasy solitude the supreme cry of Art for Art, itself, loses the exciting ring of its apparent immorality. It sounds far off. It has ceased to be a cry, and is heard only as a whisper, often incomprehensible, but at times and faintly encouraging.

Our labors and our objects

Sometimes, stretched at ease in the shade of a roadside tree, we watch the motions of a labourer in a distant field, and after a time, begin to wonder languidly as to what the fellow may be at. We watch the movements of his body, the waving of his arms, we see him bend down, stand up, hesitate, begin again. It may add to the charm of an idle hour to be told the purpose of his exertions. If we know he is trying to lift a stone, to dig a ditch, to uproot a stump, we look with a more real interest at his efforts; we are disposed to condone the jar of his agitation upon the restfulness of the landscape; and even, if in a brotherly frame of mind, we may bring ourselves to forgive his failure. We understood his object, and, after all, the fellow has tried, and perhaps he had not the strength—and perhaps he had not the knowledge. We forgive, go on our way—and forget.

And so it is with the workman of art. Art is long and life is short, and success is very far off. And thus, doubtful of strength to travel so far, we talk a little about the aim—the aim of art, which, like life itself, is inspiring, difficult—obscured by mists. It is not in the clear magic of a triumphant conclusion; it is not in the unveiling of one of those heartless secrets which are called the Laws of Nature. It is not less great, but only more difficult.

To arrest, for the space of a breath, the hands busy about the work of the earth, and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the surrounding vision of form and colour, of sunshine and shadows; to make them pause for a look, for a sigh, for a smile—such is the aim, difficult and evanescent, and reserved only for a very few to achieve. But sometimes, by the deserving and the fortunate, even that task is accomplished. And when it is accomplished—behold!—all the truth of life is there: a moment of vision, a sigh, a smile—and the return to an eternal rest.

[How a novel may be related to the author's life, Mr. Conrad suggests in the following paragraphs addressed "To my

readers in America" seventeen years after the serial publication of *The Nigger* in 1897.]

From that evening when James Wait joined the ship—late for the muster of the crew—to the moment when he left us in the open sea, shrouded in sailcloth, through the open port, I had much to do with him. He was in my watch. A negro in a British forecastle is a lonely being. He has no chums. Yet James Wait afraid of death and making her his accomplice was an imposter of some character—mastering our compassion, scornful of our sentimentalism, triumphing over our suspicions.

But in the book he is nothing; he is merely the centre of the ship's collective psychology and the pivot of the action. Yet he who in the family circle and amongst my friends is familiarly referred to as the Nigger, remains very precious to me. For the book written round him is not the sort of thing that can be attempted more than once in a life-time. It is the book by which; not as a novelist perhaps, but as an artist striving for the utmost sincerity of expression, I am willing to stand or fall. Its pages are the tribute of my unalterable and profound affection for the ship, the seamen, the winds and the great sea—the moulders of my youth, the companions of the best years of my life.

After writing the last words of that book, in the revulsion of feeling before the accomplished task, I understood that I had done with the sea, and that henceforth I had to be a writer. And almost without laying down the pen I wrote a preface, trying to express the spirit in which I was entering on the task of my new life. That preface on advice (which I now think was wrong) was never published with the book. But the late W. E. Henley, who had the courage at that time (1897) to serialize my "Nigger" in the New Review, judged it worthy to be printed as an afterword at the end of the last instalment of the tale.

A HUMBLE REMONSTRANCE

By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Biography and fiction

The art of narrative, in fact, is the same, whether it is applied to the selection and illustration of a real series of events or of an imaginary series. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (a work of cunning and inimitable art) owes its success to the same technical manœuvres as (let us say) *Tom Jones:* the clear conception of certain characters of man, the choice and presentation of certain incidents out of a great number that offered, and the invention (yes, invention) and preservation of a certain key in dialogue. In which these things are done with the more art—in which with the greater air of nature—readers will differently judge. Boswell's is, indeed, a very special case, and almost a generic; but it is not only in Boswell, it is in every biography with any salt of life, it is in every history where events and men, rather than ideas, are presented—in Tacitus, in Carlyle, in Michelet, in Macaulay—that the novelist will find many of his own methods most conspicuously and adroitly handled. He will find besides that he, who is free —who has the right to invent or steal a missing incident, who has the right, more precious still, of wholesale omission —is frequently defeated, and, with all his advantages, leaves a less strong impression of reality and passion.

Art, truth, and life

Mr. James utters his mind with a becoming fervour on the sanctity of truth to the novelist; on a more

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Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson (1850-1894) studied engineering, his father's profession, and then law. After his admission to the bar, ill-health and the desire to write led him on travels actual and imagined "in the realms of gold." In the 70's he began publishing essays and narratives of travel. *Treasure Island* appeared in 1883. In 1889 he went to Samoa with his American wife, and died there five years later, known and loved as "Tusitala," teller of stories. This essay was written in 1884 after the appearance of articles on the Art of Fiction by Henry James and Walter Besant. The first four pages have been omitted. For the James essay, see Appendix.

careful examination truth will seem a word of very debatable propriety, not only for the labours of the novelist, but for those of the historian. No art—to use the daring phrase of Mr. James—can successfully "compete with life"; and the art that seeks to do so is condemned to perish *montibus aviis*. Life goes before us, infinite in complication; attended by the most various and surprising meteors; appealing ta once to the eye, to the ear, to the mind—the seat of wonder, to the touch—so thrillingly delicate, and to the belly—so imperious when starved. It combines and employs in its manifestation the method and material, not of one art only, but of all the arts. Music is but an arbitrary trifling with a few of life's majestic chords; painting is but a shadow of its pageantry of light and colour; literature does but drily indicate that wealth of incident, of moral obligation, of virtue, vice, action, rapture, and agony, with which it teems. To "compete with life," whose sun we cannot look upon, whose passions and diseases waste and slay us—to compete with the flavour of wine, the beauty of the dawn, the scorching of fire, the bitterness of death and separation—here is, indeed, a projected escalade of heaven; here are, indeed, labours for a Hercules in a dress coat, armed with a pen and a dictionary to depict the passions, armed with a tube of superior flake-white to paint the portrait of the insufferable sun. No art is true in this sense: none can "compete with life": not even history, built indeed of indisputable facts, but these facts robbed of their vivacity and sting; so that even when we read of the sack of a city or the fall of an empire, we are surprised, and justly commend the author's talent, if our pulse be quickened. And mark, for a last differentia, that this quickening of the pulse is, in almost every case, purely agreeable; that these phantom reproductions of experience, even at their most acute, convey decided pleasure; while experience itself, in the cockpit of life, can torture and slay.

What, then, is the object, what the method, of an art, and what the source of its power? The whole secret is that no

art does "compete with life." Man's one method, whether he reasons or creates, is to half-shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality. The arts, like arithmetic and geometry, turn away their eyes from the gross, coloured, and mobile nature at our feet, and regard instead a certain figmentary abstraction. Geometry will tell us of a circle, a thing never seen in nature; asked about a green circle or an iron circle, it lays its hand upon its mouth. So with the arts. Painting, ruefully comparing sunshine and flake-white, gives up truth of colour, as it had already given up relief and movement; and instead of vying with nature, arranges a scheme of harmonious tints. Literature, above all in its most typical mood, the mood of narrative, similarly flees the direct challenge and pursues instead an independent and creative aim. So far as it imitates at all, it imitates not life but speech: not the facts of human destiny, but the emphasis and the suppressions with which the human actor tells of them. The real art that dealt with life directly was that of the first men who told their stories round the savage camp-fire. Our art is occupied, and bound to be occupied, not so much in making stories true as in making them typical; not so much in capturing the lineaments of each fact, as in marshalling all of them towards a common end. For the welter of impressions, all forcible but all discreet, which life presents, it substitutes a certain artificial series of impressions, all indeed most feebly represented, but all aiming at the same effect, all eloquent of the same idea, all chiming together like consonant notes in music or like the graduated tints in a good picture. From all its chapters, from all its pages, from all its sentences, the well-written novel echoes and re-echoes its one creative and controlling thought; to this must every incident and character contribute; the style must have been pitched in unison with this; and if there is anywhere a word that looks another way, the book would be stronger, clearer, and (I had almost said) fuller without it. Life is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt, and poignant; a work of art, in comparison, is neat, finite, self-con-

No competing with life

tained, rational, flowing, and emasculate. Life imposes by brute energy, like inarticulate thunder; art catches the ear, among the far louder noises of experience, like an air artificially made by a discreet musician. A proposition of geometry does not compete with life; and a proposition of geometry is a fair and luminous parallel for a work of art. Both are reasonable, both untrue to the crude fact; both inhere in nature, neither represents it. The novel, which is a work of art, exists, not by its resemblances to life, which are forced and material, as a shoe must still consist of leather, but by its immeasurable difference from life, which is designed and significant, and is both the method and the meaning of the work.

The novel and life

The life of man is not the subject of novels, but the inexhaustible magazine from which subjects are to be selected; the name of these is legion; and with each new subject—for here again I must differ by the whole width of heaven from Mr. James—the true artist will vary his method and change the point of attack. That which was in one case an excellence, will become a defect in another; what was the making of one book, will in the next be impertinent or dull. First each novel, and then each class of novels, exists by and for itself. I will take, for instance, three main classes, which are fairly distinct: first, the novel of adventure, which appeals to certain almost sensual and quite illogical tendencies in man; second, the novel of character, which appeals to our intellectual appreciation of man's foibles and mingled and inconstant motives; and third, the dramatic novel, which deals with the same stuff as the serious theatre, and appeals to our emotional nature and moral judgment.

The novel of adventure

And first for the novel of adventure. Mr. James refers, with singular generosity of praise, to a little book about a quest for hidden treasure; but he lets fall, by the way, some rather startling words. In this book he misses what he calls the "immense luxury" of being able to quarrel with his author. The luxury, to most of us, is to lay by our judgment, to be submerged

by the tale as by a billow, and only to awake, and begin to distinguish and find fault, when the piece is over and the volume laid aside. Still more remarkable is Mr. James' reason. He cannot criticise the author, as he goes, "because," says he, comparing it with another work, *"I have been a child, but I have never been on a quest for buried treasure."* Here is, indeed, a wilful paradox; for if he has never been on a quest for buried treasure, it can be demonstrated that he has never been a child. There never was a child (unless Master James) but has hunted gold, and been a pirate, and a military commander, and a bandit of the mountains; but has fought, and suffered shipwreck and prison, and imbrued its little hands in gore, and gallantly retrieved the lost battle, and triumphantly protected innocence and beauty. Elsewhere in his essay Mr. James has protested with excellent reason against too narrow a conception of experience; for the born artist, he contends, the "faintest hints of life" are converted into revelations; and it will be found true, I believe, in a majority of cases, that the artist writes with more gusto and effect of those things which he has only wished to do, than of those which he has done. Desire is a wonderful telescope, and Pisgah the best observatory. Now, while it is true that neither Mr. James nor the author of the work in question has ever, in the fleshly sense, gone questing after gold, it is probable that both have ardently desired and fondly imagined the details of such a life in youthful day-dreams: and the author, counting upon that, and well aware (cunning and low-minded man!) that this class of interest, having been frequently treated, finds a readily accessible and beaten road to the sympathies of the reader, addressed himself throughout to the building up and circumstantiation of this boyish dream. Character to the boy is a sealed book; for him, a pirate is a beard, a pair of wide trousers, and a liberal complement of pistols. The author, for the sake of circumstantiation and because he was himself more or less grown up, admitted character, within certain limits, into his design; but only within certain limits. Had the same puppets figured in a scheme of

another sort, they had been drawn to very different purpose; for in this elementary novel of adventure, the characters need to be presented with but one class of qualities—the warlike and formidable. So as they appear insidious in deceit and fatal in the combat, they have served their end. Danger is the matter with which this class of novel deals; fear, the passion with which it idly trifles; and the characters are portrayed only so far as they realize the sense of danger and provoke the sympathy of fear. To add more traits, to be too clever, to start the hare of moral or intellectual interest while we are running the fox of material interest, is not to enrich but to stultify your tale. The stupid reader will only be offended, and the clever reader lose the scent.

The novel of character

The novel of character has this difference from all others: that it requires no coherency of plot, and for this reason, as in the case of *Gil Blas,* it is sometimes called the novel of adventure. It turns on the humours of the persons represented; these are, to be sure, embodied in incidents, but the incidents themselves, being tributary, need not march in a progression; and the characters may be statically shown. As they enter, so they may go out; they must be consistent, but they need not grow.

The novels of Henry James

Here Mr. James will recognise the note of much of his own work: he treats, for the most part, the statics of character, studying it at rest or only gently moved; and, with his usual delicate and just artistic instinct, he avoids those stronger passions which would deform the attitudes he loves to study, and change his sitters from the humorists of ordinary life to the brute forces and bare types of more emotional moments. In his recent *Author of Beltraffio,* so just in conception, so nimble and neat in workmanship, strong passion is indeed employed; but observe that it is not displayed. Even in the heroine the working of the passion is suppressed; and the great struggle, the true tragedy, the *scène-à-faire,* passes unseen behind the panels of a locked door. The delectable invention of the young visitor is introduced, consciously or not, to this end: that Mr.

James, true to his method, might avoid the scene of passion. I trust no reader will suppose me guilty of undervaluing this little masterpiece. I mean merely that it belongs to one marked class of novel, and that it would have been very differently conceived and treated had it belonged to that other marked class, of which I now proceed to speak.

The dramatic novel

I take pleasure in calling the dramatic novel by that name, because it enables me to point out by the way a strange and peculiarly English misconception. It is sometimes supposed that the drama consists of incident. It consists of passion, which gives the actor his opportunity; and that passion must progressively increase, or the actor, as the piece proceeded, would be unable to carry the audience from a lower to a higher pitch of interest and emotion. A good serious play must therefore be founded on one of the passionate *cruces* of life, where duty and inclination come nobly to the grapple; and the same is true of what I call, for that reason, the dramatic novel. I will instance a few worthy specimens, all of our own day and language; Meredith's *Rhoda Fleming,* that wonderful and painful book, long out of print,[1] and hunted for at bookstalls like an Aldine; Hardy's *Pair of Blue Eyes;* and two of Charles Reade's, *Griffith Gaunt* and *The Double Marriage,* originally called *White Lies,* and founded (by an accident quaintly favourable to my nomenclature) on a play by Maquet, the partner of the great Dumas. In this kind of novel the closed door of *The Author of Beltraffio* must be broken open; passion must appear upon the scene and utter its last word; passion is the be-all and the end-all, the plot and the solution, the protagonist and the *deus ex machina* in one. The characters may come anyhow upon the stage: we do not care; the point is, that, before they leave it, they shall become transfigured and raised out of themselves by passion. It may be part of the design to draw them with detail; to depict a full-length character, and then behold it melt and change in the furnace of emotion. But there is no obligation of the sort;

[1] Now no longer so, thank Heaven!

nice portraiture is not required; and we are content to accept mere abstract types, so they be strongly and sincerely moved. A novel of this class may be even great, and yet contain no individual figure; it may be great, because it displays the workings of the perturbed heart and the impersonal utterance of passion; and with an artist of the second class it is, indeed, even more likely to be great, when the issue has thus been narrowed and the whole force of the writer's mind directed to passion alone. Cleverness again, which has its fair field in the novel of character, is debarred all entry upon this more solemn theatre. A far-fetched motive, an ingenious evasion of the issue, a witty instead of a passionate turn, offend us like an insincerity. All should be plain, all straightforward to the end. Hence it is that, in *Rhoda Fleming,* Mrs. Lovel raises such resentment in the reader; her motives are too flimsy, her ways are too equivocal, for the weight and strength of her surroundings. Hence the hot indignation of the reader when Balzac, after having begun the *Duchesse de Langeais* in terms of strong if somewhat swollen passion, cuts the knot by the derangement of the hero's clock. Such personages and incidents belong to the novel of character; they are out of place in the high society of the passions; when the passions are introduced in art at their full height, we look to see them, not baffled and impotently striving, as in life, but towering above circumstance and acting substitutes for fate.

And here I can imagine Mr. James, with his lucid sense, to intervene. To much of what I have said he would apparently demur; in much he would, somewhat impatiently, acquiesce. It may be true; but it is not what he desired to say or to hear said. He spoke of the finished picture and its worth when done; I, of the brushes, the palette, and the north light. He uttered his views in the tone and for the ear of good society; I, with the emphasis and technicalities of the obtrusive student. But the point, I may reply, is not merely to amuse the public, but to offer helpful advice to the young writer. And the young writer will not so much be

Advice to the young writer

helped by genial pictures of what an art may aspire to at its highest, as by a true idea of what it must be on the lowest terms. The best that we can say to him is this: Let him choose a motive, whether of character or passion; carefully construct his plot so that every incident is an illustration of the motive, and every property employed shall bear to it a near relation of congruity or contrast; avoid a sub-plot, unless, as sometimes in Shakespeare, the sub-plot be a reversion or complement of the main intrigue; suffer not his style to flag below the level of the argument; pitch the key of conversation, not with any thought of how men talk in parlors, but with a single eye to the degree of passion he may be called on to express; and allow neither himself in the narrative nor any character in the course of the dialogue, to utter one sentence that is not part and parcel of the business of the story or the discussion of the problem involved. Let him not regret if this shortens his book; it will be better so; for to add irrelevant matter is not to lengthen but to bury. Let him not mind if he miss a thousand qualities, so that he keeps unflaggingly in pursuit of the one he has chosen. Let him not care particularly if he miss the tone of conversation, the pungent material detail of the day's manners, the reproduction of the atmosphere and the environment. These elements are not essential: a novel may be excellent, and yet have none of them; a passion or a character is so much the better depicted as it rises clearer from material circumstance. In this age of the particular, let him remember the ages of the abstract, the great books of the past, the brave men that lived before Shakespeare and before Balzac. And as the root of the whole matter, let him bear in mind that his novel is not a transcript of life, to be judged by its exactitude; but a simplification of some side or point of life, to stand or fall by its significant simplicity. For although, in great men, working upon great motives, what we observe and admire is often their complexity, yet underneath appearances the truth remains unchanged: that simplification was their method, and that simplicity is their excellence.

THE NOVEL

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

I have no intention of pleading here in behalf of the little novel which follows. On the contrary, the ideas which I shall try to make clear would involve rather a criticism of the kind of psychological study which I undertook in *Pierre et Jean.*

I wish to concern myself with the Novel in general.

What is a novel?

I am not the only one to whom the same reproach is addressed by the same critics every time a new book appears. In the midst of eulogistic remarks I find regularly this, by the same pens: "The greatest fault of this work is that it is not a novel, strictly speaking." One might reply with the same contention: "The greatest defect of the writer who does me the honor of judging me is that he is not a critic."

What are, in fact, the essential characteristics of a critic?

It is necessary that without partisanship, without preconceived opinions, without the ideas of any school, without connections with any particular group of artists, he should comprehend, distinguish, and explain all the most opposite tendencies and most contrary temperaments, and entertain artistic endeavors of the most diverse nature.

Now the critic who, after *Manon Lescaut, Paul and Virginia, Don Quixote, Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Werther, Elective Affinities, Clarissa Harlowe, Emile, Candide, Cinq-Mars, René, The Three Musketeers, Mauprat, Le Père Goriot, La*

Maupassant (1850-1893) wrote this essay as a preface to his novel *Pierre et Jean,* in 1887. In translating, I have occasionally drawn isolated sentences into paragraphs. Of the six novels of Maupassant, *Une Vie* was the first (1883) and *Fort comme le mort* (1889) the last. His great reputation, however, rests upon his nearly two hundred short stories, which began to appear in 1880.

In this connection we may aptly quote from *Short Story Writing* by Walter B. Pitkin (Macmillan 1913), which finds the distinguishing mark of the short story to be its double ideal. "The short story ideal is a fusion of two artistic ideals, the one American, the other French. Poe best expressed the former, and Maupassant the latter. The American ideal is the 'Single Effect.' The French ideal is the Dramatic Effect. The Short Story is therefore a narrative drama with a single effect."

Cousine Bette, Colomba, Le Rouge et le Noir, Mademoiselle de Maupin, Notre Dame de Paris, Salammbo, Madame Bovary, Adolphe, M. de Camors, L'Assommoir, Sapho, etc., still dares to write: "This is a novel, and that is not," seems to me to be endowed with a perspicacity quite like incompetence.

In general, the critic means by "novel" an adventure more or less probable, arranged like a drama in three acts, of which the first contains the exposition, the second the action, and the third the dénouement. This manner of composing is entirely admissible if only one accepts likewise all the others.

Do there exist rules for writing a novel, without observance of which a written narrative should bear a different name?

If *Don Quixote* is a novel, is *Le Rouge et le Noir* another? If *Monte Cristo* is a novel, is *L'Assommoir* one also? Is it possible to establish a comparison between the *Elective Affinities* by Goethe, the *Three Musketeers* by Dumas, *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert, *M. de Camors* by Octave Feuillet, and *Germinal* by Zola? Which of these works is a novel? What are the famous rules? Whence do they come? Who established them? And by virtue of what principle, what authority, what reasoning?

The critic and the novelist

It appears, however, that the critics know in some peculiar and indubitable fashion what constitutes a novel and what distinguishes it from another work which is not one. This means simply that, without being producers, they are enrolled in a school, and reject, in the manner of novelists themselves, all works conceived and executed outside their aesthetic scheme. An intelligent critic ought, on the contrary, to seek for all that is most unlike the novels already written, and as much as possible impel young authors to attempt new paths.

All writers, Victor Hugo as well as Zola, have persistently claimed the absolute and indisputable right to compose, that is to imagine or to observe, according to their own personal conception of art. Talent arises from originality, which is a peculiar manner of thinking, of seeing, of understanding, and of judging. Now the critic who presumes to define the novel according to the idea he has formed in accordance with the

novels that he likes, and establishes certain invariable rules of composition, will always strive against the artistic temperament which introduces a new manner. A critic who would strictly deserve the name should be only an analyst, without bias, preferences, or passions, and like an expert in paintings consider only the artistic value of the object of art submitted to him. His comprehension, open to every impression, ought so completely to absorb his personality that he can discover and praise the books which as a man he does not like but which he must as a judge evaluate. But most critics are, in short, only readers, from which it results that they almost always censure us unjustly or else compliment us without reserve or measure.

The reader, who seeks from a book only the satisfaction of the natural bent of his mind, asks of the writer a response to his dominant taste, and he invariably describes as remarkable or *well written* a work or a passage that pleases his peculiar imagination—idealistic, cheerful, ribald, sad, dreamy, or practical.

In brief, the public is composed of many groups, who cry out to us: "Console me." "Amuse me." "Make me sad." "Arouse my sympathy." "Make me dream." "Make me laugh." "Make me shudder." "Make me weep." "Make me think." Chosen spirits alone ask of the artist: "Make me something beautiful, in the form which best suits you, according to your temperament." The artist tries; he succeeds or he fails. The critic should estimate the result only in accordance with the nature of the effort; he has no right to be preoccupied with tendencies. This has been said already a thousand times. It will always be necessary to repeat it.

So, after the literary schools that sought to give us a vision of life distorted, superhuman, poetic, tender, charming, or superb, there has come a realistic or naturalistic school which pretends to show us the truth, nothing but the truth, and the whole truth.

We must admit with equal interest these so different theories of art, and judge the works they produce solely from the point of view of their artistic value, accepting *a priori* the

general ideas out of which they were born.

The author's rights

To deny the right of an author to make a poetic work or a realistic work, is to desire to force him to modify his temperament, to challenge his originality, and not allow him to use the eye and the intelligence that nature gave him. To reproach him for seeing things beautiful or ugly, trivial or epical, gracious or sinister, is to reproach him for being made in such or such fashion and for not having seen a vision like our own.

Let us leave him free to understand, observe, conceive as he pleases, provided only that he be an artist. In order to judge the idealist, let us become poetically exalted, and prove that his dream is mediocre, commonplace, not mad enough or magnificent enough. But if we are judging a naturalist, let us show him in what respects truth in life differs from the truth in his book.

It is evident that schools so different must employ absolutely opposing methods of composition.

The romantic novelist

The novelist who transforms the unvarying, unpleasant, and brutal truth, in order to draw from it an exceptional and fascinating adventure, ought, without exaggerated anxiety for probability, to manipulate the events according to his taste, prepare and arrange them to please, to rouse, to soften the reader. The plan of his story is only a series of ingenious combinations leading adroitly to the dénouement. The incidents are disposed and graduated toward the climax and the effect of the conclusion, which is a capital and decisive event, satisfying all the curiosities awakened at the beginning, raising a barrier to further interest, and terminating so completely the story told that we no longer desire to know what will happen tomorrow to the characters who had so engaged our interest.

The realistic novelist

On the contrary, the novelist who pretends to give us an exact picture of life ought carefully to avoid all interlinking of events which seems exceptional. His purpose is not at all to tell us a story, to amuse or touch us, but to make us think, to make us understand the

profound and hidden meaning of events. Through having observed and meditated, he looks at the universe, things, facts, and men in a certain manner proper to himself, that results from the totality of his reflective observations. It is this personal vision of the world that he seeks to communicate to us by reproduction in a book. In order to move us as he himself has been moved by the spectacle of life, he must reproduce it before our eyes with scrupulous verisimilitude. He must, then, compose his work in a manner so artful, so beguiling, and apparently so simple, that it will be impossible to perceive and point out the plot of it, or discover his intentions.

Instead of contriving an adventure and unfolding it in a manner to make it interesting up to the dénouement, he will take his character or characters at a certain period of existence and lead them by natural transitions to the next following period. In this way he will show how minds are modified under the influence of surrounding circumstances, how sentiments and passions are developed, how we love, how we hate, how we contend with one another under all social conditions, how commercial interests, financial interests, family interests, political interests, struggle together.

The ingenuity of his plan will not consist in emotion or charm, in an intriguing beginning or an affecting catastrophe, but in a skilful grouping of little everyday facts from which the definitive meaning of the work will be disengaged. If in three hundred pages he presents ten years of a life in order to show what, in the midst of all the beings that surrounded it, has been its particular and characteristic significance, he must know how to eliminate, among the numberless and daily trivial incidents, those which are useless to him and to place in strong light those which would remain unperceived by less clear-sighted observers, and which give to the book its import, its total value.

One sees that such a manner of composing, so different from the old method, so plain to all eyes, often baffles the critics, and that they fail to discover all the delicate, secret, almost invisible threads employed by certain modern artists in place of the single line that was known as the Plot.

In brief, if the novelist of yesterday chose and recounted the crises of life, the poignant states of soul and heart, the novelist of today writes the history of heart, soul, and intelligence under normal conditions. To produce the effect he seeks, that is to say, the feeling of simple reality, and to bring out the artistic lesson he wishes to educe, that is, the revelation of what is veritably the contemporary man before his eyes, he must employ only facts of an incontestable and constant truth.

Truth, art and life

But in taking the very viewpoint of these realistic artists, we must discuss and contest their theory, which seems possible of summation in these words: "Nothing but the truth, and all the truth."

Their intention being to disengage the philosophy of certain invariable and current facts, they are often obliged to alter events to the profit of probability and the detriment of truth, for "Le vrai peut quelquefois n'être pas vraisemblable."

The realist, if he is an artist, will seek, not to show us a vulgar photograph of life, but to give us a vision more complete, more striking, and more convincing than the reality itself.

To narrate everything would be impossible, for it would require at least a volume a day to enumerate the multitude of insignificant incidents that fill out our existence. A choice is therefore imposed upon us—which is the first blow to the theory of "all the truth."

Life, moreover, is made up of things most diverse, most unforeseen, most contradictory, most disparate; it is brutal, without sequence, without bonds, full of catastrophes that are unexplainable, illogical, and contradictory, and which ought to be classed under the heading, *various happenings*. That is the reason why the artist, having chosen his theme, will take from this life, encumbered with accidents and futilities, only those characteristic details pertinent to his subject, and will cast aside all the rest.

One example among a thousand. The number of people who die by accident every day throughout the world is considerable. But can we cause a tile to fall upon the head of a

principal personage, or throw him under the wheels of a carriage, in the middle of a story, under pretext that it is necessary to have an accident?

Life, again, leaves everything in the same perspective, precipitates happenings, or drags them out indefinitely. Art, on the contrary, consists in using precautions and preparations, in contriving astute and artful transitions, in placing in full light, through mere skill of composition, the essential events, and in giving to all others the degree of relief proper to them according to their importance, in order to produce a deep impression of the special truth which is to be revealed.

To create the true, then, consists in giving a complete illusion of truth, in accordance with the ordinary logic of facts, and not in servilely transcribing facts in the pell-mell of their occurrence. Whence I conclude that the Realists of talent ought rather to call themselves Illusionists.

Illusions

What childishness, besides, to believe in reality when each of us carries his own reality in his own mind and his own sense organs! Our different eyes, ears, senses of smell and taste, create as many truths as there are men upon the earth. And our minds that receive their information from these organs, being variously impressed, understand, analyze, and judge as if each of us belonged to a different race.

Each of us, therefore, creates his own world-illusion—an illusion poetical, sentimental, joyous, melancholy, foul, or dismal, according to his nature. And the writer has no other mission than to reproduce faithfully this illusion by means of all the artistic processes he has attained to and can employ.

Illusion of the beautiful, which is a human convention! Illusion of the ugly, which is a changing opinion! Illusion of the true, never immutable! Illusion of the ignoble, attractive to so many! The great artists are those who impose upon humanity their particular illusion.

Let us not, then, be vexed over any theory, since each is simply the generalized expression of a temperament which makes itself manifest.

There are two theories especially which we have often dis-

cussed and set over against each other instead of admitting both one and the other, that of the analytical novel and that of the objective novel. The partisans of analysis demand that the writer devote himself to indicating the slightest evolutions of a soul, and all the most secret motives which determine our actions, allowing to the deed itself only a quite secondary importance. That is the point arrived at, a simple limit, the pretext for the story. It would be necessary, therefore, according to them, to write those formal and dream-like works in which imagination is confused with observation, in the manner of a philosopher composing a book on psychology, revealing causes by tracing them through to their most distant origins, telling all the whys of all the wishes, and discerning all the reactions of the soul moving under the impulsion of interests, passions, or instincts.

The psychological novel

The partisans of objectivity,—what an odious word!—pretend, on the contrary, to give us an exact representation of what takes place in life, carefully avoiding all complicated explanation, all dissertation upon motives, and limiting themselves to making the characters and the events pass before our eyes. For them, psychology should be concealed in a book as it is concealed in reality beneath the facts of existence. The novel conceived in this way gains interest thereby, narrative movement, color, and the stir of life.

The objective novel

Thus, instead of explaining at length the state of mind of a character, objective authors seek out the action or gesture to which that state of mind would inevitably lead a man in a given determinate situation. And they make him conduct himself in such a manner, from the beginning to the end of the volume, that all his acts, all his movements, shall be the reflection of his inmost nature,—of all his thoughts, of all his resolves, or of all his doubtings. They hide their psychology, then, instead of displaying it; they make it the framework of the story, as the invisible skeleton is the framework of the human body. The artist who paints our portrait does not show our skeleton.

It seems to me also that the novel executed in this fashion gains thereby in sincerity. It is, in the first place, more probable, for the people whom we see in action about us do not declare to us the motives they obey.

Difficulties of the psychological method

We should next take into account that if by observing men we can ascertain their nature so exactly as to foresee their course of conduct under almost all circumstances, if we are able to say with precision: "Such a man, of such temperament, in such a case, will do this," it does not follow that we are able to determine one by one all the secret evolutions of his thought, which is not ours, all the mysterious solicitations of his instincts which are not like ours, all the confused incitements of his nature, whose sense organs, nerves, blood, flesh are different from ours.

Whatever be the genius of a weak, gentle, passionless man, loving only knowledge and work, he can never transport himself so completely into the soul and body of an exuberant, sensual, violent blade, excited by desires and even by vices, as to understand and describe the most intimate impulses and sensations of a being so different, even though he may clearly foresee and relate the deeds of that life.

In short, he who deals in psychology alone cannot substitute himself for all the characters in the different situations where he places them, for it is impossible for him to change his sense organs, which are the sole intermediaries between external life and ourselves, and which impose upon us their perceptions, determine our sensibility, and create in us a soul essentially different from all those which surround us. Our vision, our knowledge of the world acquired by the aid of our senses, our ideas about life, we can transport only partially into all the characters whose inmost and unknown being we pretend to be unveiling. It is therefore always ourselves whom we reveal in the body of a king, an assassin, a thief, an honest man, a courtesan, a nun, a young girl, or a market-woman, for we are obliged to state the problem to ourselves in this way: "If *I* were king, assassin, thief, courtesan, nun, young girl, or market-woman, what should *I* do, what should *I*

think, how should *I* comport myself?" We diversify our characters, then, only by changing the age, sex, social situation, and all the circumstances of life of our *me,* which nature has surrounded with an insurmountable barrier of organs. Skill consists in not allowing that *me* to be recognized by the reader under all the various masks which serve to conceal it.

But if, from the point of view of complete exactitude alone, purely psychological analysis is debatable, it can nevertheless give us as beautiful works of art as do the other methods of working.

Today, there are the Symbolists. Why not? Their dream as artists is one to be respected; and they have this that is especially interesting—they know and proclaim the extreme difficulty of art.

It is hard to be original

In these days, in fact, one must be very mad, very daring, very presumptuous, or very stupid, to write at all! After so many masters of such varied natures, of such manifold genius, what remains to be done that has not been done, what remains to be said that has not been said? Who among us can boast of having written one page, one sentence, which is not to be found, almost identically, somewhere? When we read, we who are so saturated with French literature that the whole body gives the impression of being made out of word-paste, do we find ever a single line, a single thought, which is not familiar to us, of which we have not had at least a confused presentiment?

The man who seeks only to amuse his public by methods already known writes with confidence, in the candor of his mediocrity, works destined for the ignorant and idle crowd. But those upon whom all the centuries of past literature weigh heavily, those whom nothing contents, whom everything disgusts, because they dream better things, who feel that everything has already yielded up its flowers, to these their work always gives the impression of a useless and common production, wherefore they come to regard literary art as an elusive, mysterious thing, which a few pages of the greatest masters barely unveil.

Twenty verses, twenty sentences, read unexpectedly, may thrill us to the heart as an astonishing revelation; but the following verses resemble all other verses, and the prose that comes after resembles all other prose.

Doubtless men of genius do not experience this anguish and torment, because they carry within them an irresistible creative force. They do not pass judgment on themselves. The others, we others who are simply conscientious and persistent workers, can struggle against unconquerable discouragement only through continual effort.

Two men, by their simple and illuminating teachings gave me this power of always trying: Louis Bouilhet and Gustave Flaubert. If I speak here of them and myself, it is because their counsels, summed up in a few lines, will perhaps be useful to some young men less confident in themselves than one ordinarily is when making a beginning in letters.

The teachings of Bouilhet

Bouilhet, whom I first knew rather intimately about two years before I gained the friendship of Flaubert, by dint of repeating to me that a hundred verses, or possibly fewer, suffice for the reputation of an artist, if they are irreprochable and contain the essence of the talent and the originality of a man even of the second rank, made me understand that continual labor and a thorough knowledge of one's craft can, on some day of lucidity, power, and enthusiasm, through happy encounter with a subject according well with all the drift of one's spirit bring to bloom some brief and unique work that is as perfect as one can produce.

I came to understand next that the best known writers have seldom left more than one volume, and that it is needful, first of all, to have this opportunity to find and discern, in the midst of the multitude of matters that present themselves for our choice, that which will absorb all our faculties, all our valiance, all our artistic power.

The teachings of Flaubert

Later, Flaubert, whom I saw occasionally, took a liking to me. I ventured to submit to him some of my literary attempts. He read them with kindness and replied to me: "I do not know whether you will prove to have talent. What you have brought me shows a

certain intelligence; but do not forget this, young man, that talent, in the words of Buffon, is merely long patience. Keep on working."

I did work, and I often went back to see him, knowing that he liked me, for he was wont to call me laughingly his disciple. During seven years I wrote verses, I wrote short stories, I wrote novelettes, I even wrote a detestable drama. Of these nothing remains. The master read them all, and on the following Sunday at luncheon, he would develop his criticisms and drive into me little by little two or three principles that are the summation of his long and patient teachings. "If one has originality," he used to say, "the first thing needed is to bring it out; if one has not, one must acquire it."

The unexplored

Talent is long patience. All that one desires to express must be regarded long enough and attentively enough to discover in it some aspect which has not been seen and talked of by any one. In everything, there is somewhat that is unexplored, because we are accustomed to use our own eyes only with a recollection of what has been thought before us by others about what we are contemplating. The most trifling object contains a little of the unknown. Let us find it. In order to describe a fire that flames up and a tree on the plain, we must dwell upon that fire and that tree until for us they no longer resemble any other tree or fire. That is the way one becomes original.

The characteristic

Moreover, having laid down the truth that in the whole world there do not exist two grains of sand, two flies, two hands or two noses, that are absolutely alike, he compelled me to describe in a few sentences a being or an object in a way that would clearly particularize it and distinguish it from all the other beings or objects of the same class or species.

"When you pass," he used to say to me, "a grocer sitting at his doorway, a janitor smoking his pipe, a cab-stand, show me that grocer and that janitor, their attitude, their physical appearance, including also, as indicated by the dexterity of the picture, their whole moral nature, in such a way that I shall not confound them with any other grocer or any other janitor;

and make me see, by a single word, in what respects one cab-horse differs from the fifty others that follow and precede him."

I have set forth elsewhere his ideas on style. They are in accord with the theory of observation which I have just explained. Whatever be the thing one wishes to say, there is only one word to express it, only one verb to give it life, only one adjective to qualify it. One must search therefore until these have been discovered—that noun, that verb, that adjective,—and never rest content with approximating it, never resort to tricks, however happy, or to buffooneries of language to evade the difficulty.

Style

We can interpret and make clear the most subtile things by bringing to bear that line of Boileau: *D'un mot mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir.*

There is no need of the bizarre, complicated, distended, and Chinese vocabulary imposed upon us today under the name of artistic writing, to enable the fixation of every shade of thought; but we must discern with extreme clarity all variations in the value of a word according to the place it occupies. Let us have fewer nouns, verbs, and adjectives with almost incomprehensible meanings, but more distinctive sentences, diversely constructed, ingeniously struck out, full of sonorities and skilful rhythms. Let us require ourselves to be excellent stylists rather than collectors of rare terms.

It is, in fact, more difficult to manage a sentence to one's liking, to make it express everything, even that which it does not say, to fill it with intimations, with hidden and unformulated intentions, than to invent new expressions or to seek out in the depths of old unknown books, all those which have lost their usage and signification, and are for us but dead words.

The French language, moreover, is a pure stream which mannerists have never been and will never be able to trouble. Each century has thrown into the limpid current its fashions, its pretentious archaisms, and its preciosities, without any of these futile attempts and impotent efforts coming to the surface. The nature of this language is to be clear, logical, and

vigorous. It does not suffer itself to be enfeebled, obscured, or corrupted.

Those who today write descriptions without careful attention to abstract terms, those who make the hail or rain fall upon the *cleanness* of the window-panes, can also throw stones at the simplicity of their fellow workers. They may hit, perhaps, their fellow workers, who possess bodies, but they will never reach the simplicity, which has none.

THE BLIGHT

By MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

Why is it one writer or one magazine becomes greatly popular while others never obtain any considerable hearing? **Literary popularity**

A writer like Poe is universally read. The imitators of Poe, Conan Doyle, and the like, continue to enjoy great popularity, while our most conspicuous modern writers, claiming an elevated literary standard, remain with their pages uncut.

Certain magazines published in this country run swiftly into a circulation of millions, while others, long established, are barely able to find a few hundred thousand readers. Those of the first class become great and powerful; those of the second fall into decay.

The explanation does not lie wholly in the superior energy and business ability of the one as against the other. It would scarcely do to affirm that the popularity of Poe and Doyle arose from a superior skill in advertising.

It is a complete answer to say that these authors and these popular magazines give the public what it wants. And here one reaches a vital interest—confining the inquiry to fiction: What is it the public does want?

The reader is not looking for any form of instruction. If he wishes information in this day he goes to a textbook. The primary object of all fiction is to entertain the reader. If, while it entertains, it also ennobles him this fiction becomes a work of art; but its primary business must be to entertain and not to educate or instruct him.

These latter benefits are incidental. They can never be the direct object of fiction. Nor must it appear that the intent of fiction is to ennoble the reader. All attempted uplift is instinctively resented. Did not Thoreau say that if he should hear that one was coming to his house to do him good he

Reprinted from the *Saturday Evening Post* of December 26, 1914, by special permission of the Editor and of the Author. Mr. Post is a West Virginia lawyer who has long been known as a writer of stories of adventure and mystery.

would flee as for his life? The great primary object, then, in all fiction is to entertain.

What sort of fiction is it that has the most nearly universal appeal?

Our interest in problems

If one reflects one will immediately see that the human mind everywhere is engaged almost exclusively with problems. It is the problem that holds the mind with a consuming interest. The astronomer, as Mr. Lowell so aptly puts it, is merely a detective of the heavens; the chemist, a detective of the laboratory; the biologist, a student of clews. We are encircled by a frontier of vast mysteries. We advance by finding the solutions to these mysteries.

The human mind is essentially an implement for the solving of problems and the untangling of mysteries. This being true, it would seem to be also true that the writer who presents a problem to be solved or a mystery to be untangled will be offering those qualities in his fiction which are of the most nearly universal appeal.

False literary ideals

Immediately one meets the reply that literature of this character is not of the highest order. Writers and magazine publishers who avoid these elements of universal interest, we are told, are dealing with a higher type of literature.

This idea has been very deeply rooted. It has happened that certain men who had the public attention—men of culture, of education and refinement—have taken this position. They have inspired the textbooks taught in the schools and thereby given this theory wide credence. It has also happened that the mystery or problem story, from the very fact that it contained elements of the most nearly universal appeal, has been the vehicle usually chosen by the unskilful. This has given such fiction a general air of inferiority.

Persons of refinement and culture wish to distinguish themselves by producing something unlike that produced by the incompetent.

Thus it has happened in this country that a few men, commanding the older and more established publications, have in a measure created the impression that the absence of the

problem or mystery in a work of fiction is in some sense a distinguishing mark of the elevated literary class.

The result was that the writers and magazines who adopted this course lost their audience and restricted themselves to a narrow hearing. It was a tremendous loss; and, unless they gained something of a superior value—markedly and conspicuously superior—the thing was suicidal.

Pride and the desire to be distinguished are not enough to justify a magazine in moving toward bankruptcy or an author toward a single edition. These men must be certain that the fiction which omits the problem or mystery is superior to that which contains it; and their case must be established beyond all doubt to justify the enormous losses it entails—losses of money and of popularity.

It is not an answer to cite Mr. Galsworthy's story of the popular author who was urged by a critic to write "literature," and who continued to write better and better "literature," omitting the elements of popular appeal, until he finally produced a piece so excellent that not even the critic could read it! Nor can we dodge it with the single comment: "I do not know whether the gentlemen of this school have any talent, for I cannot read their books; but I do know there has been no genius in this country since Edgar Allan Poe."

With the possible exception of Hawthorne, there has been no genius in this country since Edgar Allan Poe; but men of ability and talent may produce literature in the absence of genius, and it is with the literature produced by these men that we are primarily concerned.

Let us inquire into the statement that the highest order of literature omits the problem or mystery.

Aristotle on tragic action

High-standing names count for much; but a high-standing name that produces literature omitting the problem or mystery will not take precedence over an equally high-standing name which discusses literature with no air of special pleading.

In the fifth century before the Christian era there flourished along the Aegean Sea a race of people that not only produced

works of art but, what is far more extraordinary, were able to say precisely how works of art ought to be produced.

Few of the records of this golden civilization have descended to us, but enough have come down to demonstrate that no subsequent civilization compares with it, in either artistic feeling or the products of it.

This great people pointed out that a work of art in literature could not be merely a representation of life. "It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen. . . . . The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen."

When Aristotle, in his *Poetics,*[1] undertook to lay down the principles by which tragedy ought to be constructed he gave the common and essential principles for the construction of all fiction—especially for the construction of the short story.

The doctrines of the *Poetics*[1] and its rules are fundamental.

The art of the short story

They deal with the elements at the basis of all fiction that would be considered a work of art. They are especially applicable to that brief form of fiction which we call the short story, and which we seek to make a work of art in our day.

In spite of all books that have been written in our modern languages on the subject, we do not find anyone who is able to tell us how to make the short story a work of art. A few men seem to know how to do it, but they are unwilling or unable to tell us how they go about the thing..

Aristotle, however, in his *Poetics,* does tell us. He lays down the rules. He does not slur over any difficulty. He points out precisely how such a work of art ought to be constructed; in fact, how it must be constructed. He is the greatest authority we know, of the greatest age we know. And if high-standing names count for anything we have a right to say we are going to the one above all others. Aristotle begins his great essay by taking a position directly contrary to those who tell us that the highest form of literature omits the prob-

[1]See discussion of Aristotle's theories in Appendix.—*Editor.*

lem or mystery—that is to say, has no distinctive plot.

"For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now, character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character; character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character. . . . .

The need of plot

"Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents. Besides which, the most powerful elements of emotional interest in Tragedy—Peripeteia, or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition Scenes—are parts of the plot. A further proof is that novices in the art attain finish of diction and precision of portraiture before they can construct the plot. It is the same with almost all the early poets.

"The Plot, then, is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place. A similar fact is seen in painting. The most beautiful colors, laid on confusedly, will not give as much pleasure as the chalk outline of a portrait."[1]

It seems, then, that the age of the very highest artistic conception held a theory adverse to those of our own age who claim the most elevated literary standard.

It must not be imagined that Aristotle was writing an arbitrary treatise on literature, or formulating rules out of his head, as we say. His statements are merely the result of the accumulated experiences of a highly intellectual age. He was undertaking to arrange and formulate the structural rules that

[1]Quoted from *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, by H. S. Butcher, Macmillan, 1911, pp. 27 and 29: part of chapter VI of the *Poetics*. See further discussion in Appendix.—*Editor.*

the observation of all literary people of his time had justified.

It was the opinion of those men that the plot was the most important feature of any literary composition pretending to be a work of art and undertaking to move the emotions of the people; and so they were accustomed to say that the poet was a maker of plots rather than of verses.

The greatest attention was given to the construction of the plot. The other features of the composition were taken up after that. The plot, as Aristotle says, was considered to be the soul of the thing, and unless a good plot were constructed it was of no use to go farther. Mere delineation of character would never make a work of art; nor could it be made a work of art by any strength or beauty of diction. It was like undertaking to weave a tapestry without first having a design or to put beautiful colors on a canvas without first having the outline of the picture drawn in.

Nothing could have so astonished the literary men of that age as this idea of our own—that the highest form of literary structure may omit the framework of the plot and be merely a fragment of life or the delineation of character.

Authorities of that age, like Aristotle, would have pointed out at once that to omit a carefully prepared plot would be to destroy or omit the machinery by which the interest of the people was held and their emotions moved. It would be to omit the two most powerful elements of all human interest—surprise and the orderly evolution of tragic incident; for in the moving of all events it is the possibility of surprise that holds the mind, and it is the evolution of tragic incident that moves the emotions.

Short story resembles drama

That this great authority of the most intellectual age of the world was speaking of the drama, and especially of tragedy, does not disturb the truth of this position. He was dealing with a form of literature intended to interest and move the people; and we, also, are speaking of precisely that.

Writers of the short story in this age are endeavoring to do with it precisely what the Greeks in their age were attempting to do with the drama—that is to say, we are endeavoring

to interest and move the people by a piece of literature complete in itself and able to be grasped at a single sitting.

The slightest reflection would make it clear to anybody that those qualities which cause the reader to follow a story through to the end, and to be moved by it, are precisely the same qualities that cause an auditor to sit through a play and be moved by it. There must be a surprise somewhere in the thing, and there must be an orderly evolution of incident—in other words, a problem or mystery to be unraveled, and virile incident to move the public to either fear or pity.

The short story or the play may do these things, either strongly and with great effect, or mildly and with slight effect; but if it is to have any effect whatever it must in some degree present these elements. It may be comedy; but, if so, it will be better if it contains the element of surprise in its structure, and if it also moves us in some degree to either fear or pity.

Plot in narrative

The highest form of the short story will be found to run parallel with the highest form of the play, in that both require a carefully constructed plot, including the element of surprise and an orderly evolution of tragic incident.

"As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form[1] . . . . .the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle and an end. It will thus resemble a single and coherent organism, and produce the pleasure proper to it.

"It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be. For as the sea fight at Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time, but did not tend to any one result, so, in the sequence of events, one thing sometimes follows another, and yet no single result is thereby produced."[1]

If we take the highest form of literature, as the Greeks took

[1]Aristotle is here discussing specifically the Epic.—*Editor.*

it, to be that which will hold the interest of an intelligent public to the closest attention and move its emotions to the greatest degree, then our fiction, on which we depend for this effect, must have the strongest plot, including the element of surprise and the most virile tragic incidents we can assemble.

Need of problem and surprise

The reason why a plot of the first order must contain a problem or mystery—that is to say, something to unravel—is that the mind may be led step by step to the surprise. And the surprise is the end we are after.

The reason tragic incidents must be assembled is because the human mind is more moved by tragic incident than by any other. If we would move men in the greatest degree it is tragic incident we must use. Under the scheme of the universe it is the tragic things that seem the most real. Things pleasing and comfortable do not strike us with the same emotions of fear and pity as do things terrible and tragic. Moreover, as Taine says, we must deal with tragic incidents to produce our greatest effects, because it is the tragic incident that epitomizes life.

The age that produced the greatest works of art, and also wrote down for us precisely how those works of art ought to be constructed, gave the first and greatest attention to the structure of the plot. If one stops to reflect one will see that there must always be what one would call a plot even in the mildest form of the short story. Even in what one calls "a fragment of life" or a "human document," it must be; for nothing in life is complete. Things happen there, as Maupassant pointed out, always on the same plane, and the sequence of events there does not tend to a unity of result.

Artistic unity and design

A work of art cannot be a mere segment of either Nature or life. It must be a completed thing—a unity. It must have a beginning, a middle and an end. We must be satisfied with it, when it is finished, as a complete thing in itself. It cannot be a fragment, only to be understood by being joined to other fragments. A work of art cannot be a leaf torn out of a storybook; it cannot be a strip

[1]*Poetics XXIII,* Transl., Butcher, p. 89.—*Editor.*

slashed out of a tapestry; it cannot be a segment cut out of a picture. It must be a whole story—a whole tapestry—a whole picture.

Therefore, no matter what one may pretend, or what refined and elevated work one may assume, one cannot produce any work of art in fiction except by assembling elements and constructing something that is complete in itself.

One must have a plan of some character to begin with. If one would weave a tapestry one must have a design; if one would paint a picture one must first have a drawing; and if one would write a story one must have a plot or skeleton structure into which to put one's incidents.

It would be a strange doctrine that advised a tapestry weaver to go ahead without a design, or a painter to go ahead without a sketch or drawing; as well advise an architect to build his house without a plan or a contractor to build a railroad without a survey.

If one will go into the Louvre, in Paris, or into any good art gallery, and examine the unfinished work of the great painters, one will find they began with the most careful and accurate drawings of the picture they intended to paint. If one takes down any great short story one will find it to be built on a plan equally laboriously constructed. The reader does not usually see this, as he does not see the painstaking drawings behind the picture; but, nevertheless, it is there.

Misguided talent

It is a matter of profound regret that men of talent and culture in this country have got the idea that, in order to distinguish themselves from the common run of writers, they must avoid the very elements essential to the highest form of literature. Because surprise in the plot and virile incident have the widest appeal, and are therefore usually undertaken by the unskillful, these men have determined to avoid them altogether.

Alas! In doing so they abandon the highest forms of literature. Their publications, holding to this theory, must give up the whole people and confine themselves to a narrow circle of readers; and such writers must give up the whole people as readers of their works and be content with the few who

are of like opinion with themselves.

This is a great loss. The people lose the benefit of these men of advanced learning and culture, and these men lose the ear of the world. One may claim to have so much refinement that one ceases to be a factor in great affairs; and lesser men, who are not afraid to take hold of the realities of life, come in and supplant one.

In spite of every pretense the orator wishes to have a large audience, and the writer desires to have the whole people read his work. One may shut oneself up and pretend that the opinion of the world does not concern one; but one deceives oneself.

Simplicity wins the world

Meredith, when he was dying, lamented because the English people did not read his books. It was his own fault. He chose an involved and unnatural style, in which things were purposely made difficult to understand rather than easy; and he suffered from it. He did not lack plot and tragic incident but his peculiarities became more marked as he grew older and his style more involved and difficult.

Long before him, Doctor Johnson pointed out that nothing unusual survives. Before him was the great example of King James' translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, showing how literature can always be simple, noble and of the highest order and yet plain to everybody. Chrysippus was an involved writer, as in our day is Mr. Henry James; and Epictetus said of him:

"When some one may exalt himself, in that he is able to understand and expound the works of Chrysippus, say then to thyself: 'If Chrysippus had not written obscurely this man would have had nothing whereon to exalt himself'."

If one points out the excellences of a work produced by men who do not believe in plot and tragic incident, he must remember, if these men do so well with literature of their kind, how wonderfully they would have done if they had dealt with the highest form of the short story. It is a fine thing to have the learning, the culture and the talent of these men; but it is an ill thing to put this ability to the delineation of

trifling things, lacking elements of universal interest.

If the unskilful, with a rough plot and badly assembled incidents, can get a hearing, these men, with skilful plots and properly assembled incidents, could reach and move the whole people. They would be a great force in our literature. They would be moving factors in our civilization. Their publications would flourish and their editions would be read by everybody.

The basic element in the taste of the public is correct. The demand of the human mind for mystery or problem—something to unravel—is universal. It is the desire of everybody to know how persons will act in tragic situations; how men of individuality and power in high places will conduct themselves under certain conditions of stress. We shall never cease to be interested in these things, and the author who presents them to us will have our attention.

Meet the public's demand

It has, therefore, happened in this country that the men who have had the foresight and courage to give the reading public these universal elements of interest in their fiction have built up great and prosperous publications, while those who have denied the public these elements of interest have fallen into bankruptcy.

Resolute editors, refusing to be influenced by the pretensions of the smaller dilettante class, have been able to run the circulation of their periodicals into incredible figures.

They have foreseen—what the great Greeks so conclusively knew—that a piece of fiction, to interest the whole people, must have a plot containing surprises, and must be elaborated by virile incident. They have not been afraid to seek and encourage fiction of this character.

They have seen that fiction containing these elements, even though badly done, was of more interest to the people than excellently drawn character studies that do not get anywhere, or faithful portraiture of life that lacks unity and completeness.

These men would be glad if the fiction containing the organic elements of interest were better done. They would be glad to have faithful portraiture of life and excellent characteriza-

tion in these stories, combined with the basic elements of universal interest; for if they had they would have not only the highest type but also the literature of widest appeal..

It is not in the hands of the cloistered professor of English, nor yet in the embalmed pages of the exclusive magazine pretending to have an elevated standard, that the future of our literature lies, but across the knees of the men who are going to the whole people with their publications.

These men are dealing with today. They are handling what Taine called the "hot vitals of life." They will not be bound by any Chinese veneration of old precedents. They will reject the exaggerated imagery of the Elizabethan Age as readily as the inanities of the Victorian, and as readily the complacent instructions of the newest British novelist.

Nor will they be bound by the excessive suppressions of a sterile dilettantism. They will insist that the language shall become clear, direct and virile, and that those who write must have a story in their heads to tell.

SOME PLATITUDES CONCERNING DRAMA

By JOHN GALSWORTHY

A drama must be shaped so as to have a spire of meaning. Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral; and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring that moral poignantly to the light of day. Such is the moral that exhales from plays like *Lear, Hamlet,* and *Macbeth.* But such is not the moral to be found in the great bulk of contemporary Drama. The moral of the average play is now, and probably has always been, the triumph at all costs of a supposed immediate ethical good over a supposed immediate ethical evil.

The moral in a drama

The vice of drawing these distorted morals has permeated the Drama to its spine; discoloured its art, humanity, and significance; infected its creators, actors, audience, critics; too often turned it from a picture into a caricature. A Drama which lives under the shadow of the distorted moral forgets how to be free, fair, and fine—forgets so completely that it often prides itself on having forgotten.

Now, in writing plays, there are, in this matter of the moral, three courses open to the serious dramatist. The first is: To definitely set before the public that which it wishes to have set before it, the views and codes of life by which the public lives and in which it believes. This way is the most common, succcessful, and popular. It makes the dramatist's position sure, and not too obviously authoritative.

Three courses for the dramatist

The second course is: To definitely set before the public those views and codes of life by which the dramatist himself lives, those theories in which he himself believes, the more effectively if they are the opposite of what the public wishes to

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Mr. Galsworthy began publishing novels about 1897, and dramas ten years later. He prefers to deal with social problems, as the titles of plays such as *Strife, Justice* and *Mob* would suggest. In his many delightful essays he frequently theorizes about art.

have placed before it, presenting them so that the audience may swallow them like powder in a spoonful of jam.

There is a third course: To set before the public no cut-and-dried codes, but the phenomena of life and character, selected and combined, *but not distorted,* by the dramatist's outlook, set down without fear, favour, or prejudice, leaving the public to draw such poor moral as nature may afford. This third method requires a certain detachment; it requires a sympathy with, a love of, and a curiosity as to, things for their own sake; it requires a far view, together with patient industry, for no immediately practical result.

Playwright doing good

It was once said of Shakespeare that he had never done any good to any one, and never would. This, unfortunately, could not, in the sense in which the word "good" was then meant, be said of most modern dramatists. In truth, the good that Shakespeare did to humanity was of a remote, and, shall we say, eternal nature; something of the good that men get from having the sky and the sea to look at. And this partly because he was, in his greater plays at all events, free from the habit of drawing a distorted moral. Now, the playwright who supplies to the public the facts of life distorted by the moral which it expects, does so that he may do the public what he considers an immediate good, by fortifying its prejudices; and the dramatist who supplies to the public facts disorted by his own advanced morality, does so because he considers that he will at once benefit the public by substituting for its worn-out ethics, his own. In both cases the advantage the dramatist hopes to confer on the public is immediate and practical.

But matters change, and morals change; men remain—and to set men, and the facts about them, down faithfully, so that they draw for us the moral of their natural actions, may also possibly be of benefit to the community. It is, at all events, harder than to set men and facts down, as they ought, or ought not to be. This, however, is not to say that a dramatist should, or indeed can, keep himself and his temperamental philosophy out of his work. As a man lives and thinks, so will he write. But it is certain, that to the making of good drama, as to the

practice of every other art, there must be brought an almost passionate love of discipline, a white heat of self-respect, a desire to make the truest, fairest, best thing in one's power; and that to these must be added an eye that does not flinch. Such qualities alone will bring to a drama the selfless character which soaks it with inevitability.

The word "pessimist" is frequently applied to the few dramatists who have been content to work in this way. It has been applied, among others, to Euripides, to Shakespeare, to Ibsen; it will be applied to many in the future. Nothing, however, is more dubious than the way in which these two words "pessimist" and "optimist" are used; for the optimist appears to be he who cannot bear the world as it is, and is forced by his nature to picture it as it ought to be, and the pessimist one who cannot only bear the world as it is, but loves it well enough to draw it faithfully. The true lover of the human race is surely he who can put up with it in all its forms, in vice as well as in virtue, in defeat no less than in victory; the true seer he who sees not only joy but sorrow, the true painter of human life one who blinks nothing. It may be that he is also, incidentally, its true benefactor.

In the whole range of the social fabric there are only two impartial persons, the scientist and the artist, and under the latter heading such dramatists as desire to write not only for today, but for tomorrow, must strive to come.

But dramatists being as they are made—past remedy—it is perhaps more profitable to examine the various points at which their qualities and defects are shown.

The plot

The plot! A good plot is that sure edifice which slowly rises out of the interplay of circumstance on temperment, and temperament on circumstance, within the enclosing atmosphere of an idea. A human being is the best plot there is; it may be impossible to see why he is a good plot, because the idea within which he was brought forth cannot be fully grasped; but it is plain that *he is a good plot.* He is organic. And so it must be with a good play. Reason alone produces no good plots; they come by original sin, sure conception, and instinctive after-

power of selecting what benefits the germ. A bad plot, on the other hand, is simply a row of stakes, with a character impaled on each—characters who would have liked to live, but came to untimely grief; who started bravely, but fell on these stakes, placed beforehand in a row, and were transfixed one by one, while their ghosts stride on, squeaking and gibbering, through the play. Whether these stakes are made of facts or of ideas, according to the nature of the dramatist who planted them, their effect on the unfortunate characters is the same; the creatures were begotten to be staked, and staked they are! The demand for a good plot, not unfrequently heard, commonly signifies: "Tickle my sensations by stuffing the play with arbitrary adventures, so that I need not be troubled to take the characters seriously. Set the persons of the play to action, regardless of time, sequence, atmosphere, and probability!"

True dramatic action

Now, true dramatic action is what characters do, at once contrary, as it were, to expectation, and yet because they have already done other things. No dramatist should let his audience know what is coming; but neither should he suffer his characters to act without making his audience feel that those actions are in harmony with temperament, and arise from previous known actions, together with the temperaments and previous known actions of the other characters in the play. The dramatist who hangs his characters to his plot, instead of hanging his plot to his characters, is guilty of cardinal sin.

The dialogue

The dialogue! Good dialogue again is character, marshalled so as continually to stimulate interest or excitement. The reason good dialogue is seldom found in plays is merely that it is hard to write, for it requires not only a knowledge of what interests or excites, but such a feeling for character as brings misery to the dramatist's heart when his creations speak as they should not speak—ashes to his mouth when they say things for the sake of saying them—disgust when they are "smart."

The art of writing true dramatic dialogue is an austere art, denying itself all license, grudging every sentence devoted to

the mere machinery of the play, suppressing all jokes and epigrams severed from character, relying for fun and pathos on the fun and tears of life. From start to finish good dialogue is hand-made, like good lace; clear, of fine texture, furthering with each thread the harmony and strength of a design to which all must be subordinated.

But good dialogue is also spiritual action. In so far as the dramatist divorces his dialogue from spiritual action—that is to say, from progress of events, or toward events which are significant of character—he is stultifying τὸ δράμα the thing done; he may make pleasing disquisitions, he is not making drama. And in so far as he twists character to suit his moral or his plot, he is neglecting a first principle, that truth to Nature which alone invests art with hand-made quality.

Characters

The dramatist's license, in fact, ends with his design. In conception alone he is free. He may take what character or group of characters he chooses, see them with what eyes, knit them with what idea, within the limits of his temperament; but once taken, seen, and knitted, he is bound to treat them like a gentleman, with the tenderest consideration of their mainsprings. Take care of character; action and dialogue will take care of themselves! The true dramatist gives full rein to his temperament in the scope and nature of his subject; having once selected subject and characters, he is just, gentle, restrained, neither gratifying his lust for praise at the expense of his offspring, nor using them as puppets to flout his audience. Being himself the nature that brought them forth, he guides them in the course predestined at their conception. So only have they a chance of defying Time, which is always lying in wait to destroy the false, topical, or fashionable, all—in a word—that is not based on the permanent elements of human nature. The perfect dramatist rounds up his characters and facts within the ring-fence of a dominant idea which fulfils the craving of his spirit; having got them there, he suffers them to live their own lives.

Flavour

Plot, action, character, dialogue! But there is yet another subject for a platitude. Flavour! An impalpable quality, less easily captured than the scent

of a flower, the peculiar and most essential attribute of any work of art! It is the thin, poignant spirit which hovers up out of a play, and is as much its differentiating essence as is caffeine of coffee. Flavour, in fine, is the spirit of the dramatist projected into his work in a state of volatility, so that no one can exactly lay hands on it, here, there, or anywhere. This distinctive essence of a play, marking its brand, is the one thing at which the dramatist cannot work, for it is outside his consciousness. A man may have many moods, he has but one spirit; and this spirit he communicates in some subtle, unconscious way to all his work. It waxes and wanes with the currents of his vitality, but no more alters than a chestnut changes into an oak.

For, in truth, dramas are very like unto trees, springing from seedlings, shaping themselves inevitably in accordance with the laws fast hidden within themselves, drinking sustenance from the earth and air, and in conflict with the natural forces round them. So they slowly come to full growth, until warped, stunted, or risen to fair and gracious height, they stand open to all the winds. And the trees that spring from each dramatist are of different race; he is the spirit of his own sacred grove, into which no stray tree can by any chance enter.

Types of drama

One more platitude. It is not unfashionable to pit one form of drama against another—holding up the naturalistic to the disadvantage of the epic; the epic to the belittlement of the fantastic; the fantastic to the detriment of the naturalistic. Little purpose is thus served. The essential meaning, truth, beauty, and irony of things may be revealed under all these forms. Vision over life and human nature can be as keen and just, the revelation as true, inspiring, delight-giving, and thought-provoking, whatever fashion be employed—it is simply a question of doing it well enough to uncover the kernel of the nut. Whether the violet come from Russia, from Parma, or from England, matters little. Close by the Greek temples at Pæstum there are violets that seem redder, and sweeter, than any ever seen—as though they have sprung up out of the footprints of some old pagan

goddess; but under the April sun, in a Devonshire lane, the little blue scentless violets capture every bit as much of the spring. And so it is with drama—no matter what its form—it need only be the "real thing," need only have caught some of the precious fluids, revelation, or delight, and imprisoned them within a chalice to which we may put our lips and continually drink.

Our renascent drama

And yet, starting from this last platitude, one may perhaps be suffered to speculate as to the particular forms that our renascent drama is likely to assume. For our drama is renascent, and nothing will stop its growth. It is not renascent because this or that man is writing, but because of a new spirit. A spirit that is no doubt in part the gradual outcome of the impact on our home-grown art, of Russian, French, and Scandinavian influences, but which in the main rises from an awakened humanity in the conscience of our time.

What, then, are to be the main channels down which the renascent English drama will float in the coming years? It is more than possible that these main channels will come to be two in number and situate far apart.

Naturalistic drama

The one will be the broad and clear-cut channel of naturalism, down which will course a drama poignantly shaped, and inspired with high intention, but faithful to the seething and multiple life around us, drama such as some are inclined to term photographic, deceived by a seeming simplicity into forgetfulness of the old proverb, "Ars est celare artem," and oblivious of the fact that, to be vital, to grip, such drama is in every respect as dependent on imagination, construction, selection, and elimination—the main laws of artistry—as ever was the romantic or rhapsodic play. The question of naturalistic technique will bear, indeed, much more study than has yet been given to it. The aim of the dramatist employing it is obviously to create such an illusion of actual life passing on the stage as to compel the spectator to pass through an experience of his own, to think, and talk, and move with the people he sees thinking, talking, and moving in front of him.

A false phrase, a single word out of tune or time, will destroy that illusion and spoil the surface as surely as a stone heaved into a still pool shatters the image seen there. But this is only the beginning of the reason why the naturalistic is the most exacting and difficult of all techniques. It is easy enough to *reproduce* the exact conversation and movements of persons in a room; it is desperately hard to *produce* the perfectly natural conversation and movements of those persons, when each natural phrase spoken and each natural movement made has not only to contribute toward the growth and perfection of a drama's soul, but also to be a revelation, phrase by phrase, movement by movement, of essential traits of character. To put it another way, naturalistic art, when alive, indeed to be alive at all, is simply the art of manipulating a procession of most delicate symbols. Its service is the swaying and focussing of men's feelings and thoughts in the various departments of human life. It will be like a steady lamp held up from time to time, in whose light things will be seen for a space clearly and in due proportion, freed from the mists of prejudice and partisanship.

Poetic prose-drama

And the other of these two main channels will, I think, be a twisting and delicious stream, which will bear on its breast new barques of poetry, shaped, it may be, like prose, but a prose incarnating through its fantasy and symbolism all the deeper aspirations, yearning, doubts, and mysterious stirrings of the human spirit; a poetic prose-drama, emotionalising us by its diversity and purity of form and invention, and whose province will be to disclose the elemental soul of man and the forces of Nature, not perhaps as the old tragedies disclosed them, not necessarily in the epic mood, but always with beauty and in the spirit of discovery.

Such will, I think, be the two vital forms of our drama in the coming generation. And between these two forms there must be no crude unions; they are too far apart, the cross is too violent. For, where there is a seeming blend of lyricism and naturalism, it will on examination be found, I think, to exist only in plays whose subjects or settings—as in Synge's

"Playboy of the Western World," or in Mr. Masefield's "Nan" —are so removed from our ken that we cannot really tell, and therefore do not care, whether an absolute illusion is maintained. The poetry which may and should exist in naturalistic drama, can only be that of perfect rightness of proportion, rhythm, shape—the poetry, in fact, that lies in all vital things. It is the ill-mating of forms that has killed a thousand plays. We want no more bastard drama; no more attempts to dress out the simple dignity of everyday life in the peacock's feathers of false lyricism; no more straw-stuffed heroes or heroines; no more rabbits and goldfish from the conjurer's pockets, nor any limelight. Let us have starlight, moonlight, sunlight, and the light of our own self-respects.

1909.

THE PROVINCES OF THE SEVERAL ARTS

By JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

1

Art is expression of thought or feeling

"Art," said Goethe, "is but form-giving." We might vary this definition, and say, "Art is a method of expression or presentation." Then comes the question: If art gives form, if it is a method of expression or presentation, to what does it give form, what does it express or present? The answer certainly must be: Art gives form to human consciousness; expresses or presents the feeling or the thought of man. Whatever else art may do by the way, in the communication of innocent pleasures, in the adornment of life and the softening of manners, in the creation of beautiful shapes and sounds, this, at all events, is its prime function.

While investing thought and sentiment, the spiritual subject-matter of all art, with form, or finding for it proper modes of presentation, each of the arts employs a special medium,

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Definitions of art are continually being offered, because none is quite adequate. Emerson says: "The expression of thought by speech or action to any end is art."

Galsworthy is more explicit. "Art is that imaginative expression of human energy, which, through technical concretion of feeling and perception, tends to reconcile the individual with the universal, by exciting in him impersonal emotion. And the greatest Art is that which excites the greatest impersonal emotion in an hypothecated perfect human being." (*The Inn of Tranquillity,* "Vague Thoughts on Art.") And he explains: "Impersonal emotion! And what—I thought—do I mean by that? Surely I mean: That is not Art, which, while I am contemplating it, inspires me with any active or directive impulse; that is Art, when, for however brief a moment, it replaces within me interest in myself by interest in itself." "The word impersonal, then, is but used in this my definition to signify momentary forgetfulness of one's own personality and its active wants."

Of Tolstoi's book, *What Is Art?* we speak elsewhere.

obeying the laws of beauty proper to that medium. The vehicles of the arts, roughly speaking, are solid substances (like ivory, stone, wood, metal), pigments, sounds, and words. The masterly handling of these vehicles and the realization of their characteristic types of beauty have come to be regarded as the craftsman's paramount concern. And in a certain sense this is a right conclusion; for dexterity in the manipulation of the chosen vehicle, and power to create a beautiful object, distinguish the successful artist from the man who may have had like thoughts and feelings. This dexterity, this power, are the properties of the artist *qua* artist. Yet we must not forget that the form created by the artist for the expression of a thought or feeling is not the final end of art itself. That form, after all, is but the mode of presentation through which the spiritual content manifests itself. Beauty, in like manner, is not the final end of art, but is the indispensable condition under which the artistic manifestation of the spiritual content must be made. It is the business of art to create an ideal world, in which perception, emotion, understanding, action, all elements of human life sublimed by thought, shall reappear in concrete forms as beauty. This being so, the logical criticism of art demands that we should not only estimate the technical skill of an artist and his faculty for presenting beauty to the aesthetic sense, but that we should also ask ourselves what portion of the human spirit he has chosen to invest with form, and how he has conceived his subject. It is not necessary that the ideas embodied in a work of art should be the artist's own. They may be common to the race and age; as, for instance, the conception of sovereign deity expressed in the 'Olympian Zeus' of Pheidias, or the conception of divine maternity expressed in Raphael's 'Madonna di San Sisto.' Still the personality of the artist, his own intellectual and moral nature, his peculiar way of thinking and feeling, his individual attitude toward the material given to him in ideas of human consciousness, will modify his choice of subject and of form, and will determine his specific type of beauty. To take an example; supposing that an idea, common to his race and age,

An ideal world the final aim of art

is given to the artist for treatment; this will be the final end of the work of art which he produces. But his personal qualities and technical performance determine the degree of success or failure to which he attains in seizing that idea and in presenting it with beauty. Signorelli fails where Perugino excels, in giving adequate and lovely form to the religious sentiment. Michel Angelo is sure of the sublime, and Raphael of the beautiful.

Art is thus the expression of the human spirit by the artist to his fellow-men. The subject-matter of the arts is commensurate with what man thinks and feels and does. It is as deep as religion, as wide as life. But what distinguishes art from religion or from life is, that this subject-matter must assume beautiful form, and must be presented directly or indirectly to the senses. Art is not the school or the cathedral, but the playground, the paradise of humanity. It does not teach, it does not preach. Nothing abstract enters into art's domain. Truth and goodness are transmuted into beauty there, just as in science beauty and goodness assume the shape of truth, and in religion truth and beauty become goodness. The rigid definitions, the unmistakable laws of science, are not to be found in art. Whatever art has touched acquires a concrete sensuous embodiment, and thus ideas presented to the mind in art have lost a portion of their pure thought-essence. It is on this account that the religious conceptions of the Greeks were so admirably fitted for the art of sculpture, and certain portions of the mediaeval Christian mythology lent themselves so well to painting. For the same reason the metaphysics of ecclesiastical dogma defy the artist's plastic faculty. Art, in a word, is a middle term between reason and the senses. Its secondary aim, after the prime end of manifesting the human spirit in beautiful form has been accomplished, is to give tranquil and innocent enjoyment.

Beautiful form the characteristic of art

2

From what has gone before, it will be seen that no human being can make or mould a beautiful form without incorporat-

ing in that form some portion of the human mind, however crude, however elementary. In other words, there is no work of art without a theme, without a motive, without a subject. The presentation of that theme, that motive, that subject, is the final end of art. The art is good or bad according as the subject has been well or ill presented, consistently with the laws of beauty special to the art itself. Thus we obtain two standards for aesthetic criticism. We judge a statue, for example, both by the sculptor's intellectual grasp upon his subject, and also by his technical skill and sense of beauty. In a picture of the 'Last Judgment' by Fra Angelico we say that the bliss of the righteous has been more successfully treated than the torments of the wicked, because the former has been better understood, although the painter's skill in each is equal. In the Perseus of Cellini we admire the sculptor's spirit, finish of execution, and originality of design, while we deplore that want of sympathy with the heroic character which makes his type of physical beauty slightly vulgar and his facial expression vacuous.

Two standards of aesthetic criticism

If the phrase "Art for art's sake" has any meaning, this meaning is simply that the artist, having chosen a theme, thinks exclusively in working at it of technical dexterity or the quality of beauty. There are many inducements for the artist thus to narrow his function, and for the critic to assist him by applying the canons of a soulless connoisseurship to his work; for the conception of the subject is but the starting-point in art-production, and the artist's difficulties and triumphs as a craftsman lie in the region of technicalities. He knows, moreover, that however deep or noble his idea may be, his work of art will be worthless if it fail in skill or be devoid of beauty. What converts a thought into a statue or picture, is the form found for it; and so the form itself seems all-important. The artist, therefore, too easily imagines that he may neglect his theme; that a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, or, as Cellini put it, *"un bel corpo ignudo,"* is enough. And this is especially easy in an age which reflects much upon the

Art must reveal the human spirit

arts, and pursues them with enthusiasm, while its deeper thoughts and sentiments are not of the kind which translate themselves readily into artistic form. But, after all, a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, a sonorous stanza, a learned essay in counterpoint, are not enough. They are all excellent good things, yielding delight to the artistic sense and instruction to the student. Yet when we think of the really great statues, pictures, poems, music of the world, we find that these are really great because of something more —and that more is their theme, their presentation of a noble portion of the human soul. Artists and art-students may be satisfied with perfect specimens of a craftsman's skill, independent of his theme; but the mass of men will not be satisfied; and it is as wrong to suppose that art exists for artists and art-students, as to talk of art for art's sake. Art exists for humanity. Art transmutes thought and feeling into terms of beautiful form. Art is great and lasting in proportion as it appeals to the human consciousness at large, presenting to it portions of itself in adequate and lovely form.

3

The several arts

It was necessary in the first place firmly to apprehend the truth that the final end of all art is the presentation of a spiritual content; it is necessary in the next place to remove confusions by considering the special circumstances of the several arts.

Each art has its own vehicle of expression. What it can present and how it can present it, depends upon the nature of this vehicle. Thus, though architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, meet upon the common ground of spiritualized experience—though the works of art produced by the architect, sculptor, painter, musician, poet, emanate from the spiritual nature of the race, are coloured by the spiritual nature of the men who make them, and express what is spiritual in humanity under concrete forms invented for them by the artist—yet it is certain that all of these arts do not deal exactly with the same portions of this common material in the same way or with the same results. Each has its own department.

Each exhibits qualities of strength and weakness special to itself. To define these several departments, to explain the relation of these several vehicles of presentation to the common subject-matter, is the next step in criticism.

4

Architecture

Of the fine arts, architecture alone subserves utility. We build for use. But the geometrical proportions which the architect observes, contain the element of beauty and powerfully influence the soul. Into the language of arch and aisle and colonnade, of cupola and facade and pediment, of spire and vault, the architect translates emotion, vague perhaps but deep, mute but unmistakable. When we say that a building is sublime or graceful, frivolous or stern, we mean that sublimity or grace, frivolity or sternness, is inherent in it. The emotions connected with these qualities are inspired in us when we contemplate it, and are presented to us by its form. Whether the architect deliberately aimed at the sublime or graceful—whether the dignified serenity of the Athenian genius sought to express itself in the Parthenon, and the mysticism of mediaeval Christianity in the gloom of Chartres Cathedral—whether it was Renaissance paganism which gave its mundane pomp and glory to St. Peter's, and the refined selfishness of royalty its specious splendour to the palace of Versailles—need not be curiously questioned. The fact that we are impelled to raise these points, that architecture more almost than any art connects itself indissolubly with the life, the character, the moral being of a nation and an epoch, proves that we are justified in bringing it beneath our general definition of the arts. In a great measure because it subserves utility, and is therefore dependent upon the necessities of life, does architecture present to us through form the human spirit. Comparing the palace built by Giulio Romano for the Dukes of Mantua with the contemporary castle of a German prince, we cannot fail at once to comprehend the difference of spiritual conditions, as these displayed themselves in daily life, which then separated Italy from the Teutonic nations. But this is not all. Spiritual

quality in the architect himself finds clear expression in his work. Coldness combined with violence marks Brunelleschi's churches; a certain suavity and well-bred taste the work of Bramante; while Michel Angelo exhibits wayward energy in his Library of S. Lorenzo, and Amadeo self-abandonment to fancy in his Lombard chapels. I have chosen examples from one nation and one epoch in order that the point I seek to make, the demonstration of a spiritual quality in buildings, may be fairly stated.

5

Imitation of material objects

Sculpture and painting distinguish themselves from the other fine arts by the imitation of concrete existences in nature. They copy the bodies of men and animals, the aspects of the world around us, and the handiwork of mankind. Yet, in so far as they are rightly arts, they do not make imitation an object in itself. The grapes of Zeuxis at which birds pecked, the painted dog at which a cat's hair bristles—if such grapes or such a dog were ever put on canvas—are but evidences of the artist's skill, not of his faculty as artist. These two plastic, or, as I prefer to call them, figurative arts, use their imitation of the external world for the expression, the presentation of internal, spiritual things. The human form is for them the outward symbol of the inner human spirit, and their power of presenting spirit is limited by the means at their disposal.

Sculpture

Sculpture employs stone, wood, clay, the precious metals, to model forms, detached and independent, or raised upon a flat surface in relief. Its domain is the whole range of human character and consciousness, in so far as these can be indicated by fixed facial expression, by physical type, and by attitude. If we dwell for an instant on the greatest historical epoch of sculpture, we shall understand the domain of this art in its range and limitation. At a certain point of Greek development the Hellenic Pantheon began to be translated by the sculptors into statues; and when the genius of the Greeks expired in Rome, the cycle of their psychological conceptions had been exhaustively presented

through this medium. During that long period of time, the most delicate gradations of human personality, divinised, idealised, were submitted to the contemplation of the consciousness which gave them being, in appropriate types. Strength and swiftness, massive force and airy lightness, contemplative repose and active energy, voluptuous softness and refined grace, intellectual sublimity and lascivious seductiveness—the whole rhythm of qualities which can be typified by bodily form—were analysed, selected, combined in various degrees, to incarnate the religious conceptions of Zeus, Aphrodite, Herakles, Dionysus, Pallas, Fauns and Satyrs, Nymphs of woods and waves, Tritons, the genius of Death, heroes and hunters, lawgivers and poets, presiding deities of minor functions, man's lustful appetites and sensual needs. All that men think, or do, or are, or wish for, or imagine in this world, had found exact corporeal equivalents. Not physiognomy alone, but all the portions of the body upon which the habits of the animating soul are wont to stamp themselves, were studied and employed as symbolism. Uranian Aphrodite was distinguished from her Pandemic sister by chastened, lust-repelling loveliness. The muscles of Herakles were more ponderous than the tense sinews of Achilles. The Hermes of the palaestra bore a torso of majestic depth; the Hermes who carried messages from heaven had limbs alert for movement. The brows of Zeus inspired awe; the breasts of Dionysus breathed delight.

Symbolism in sculpture

A race accustomed, as the Greeks were, to read this symbolism, accustomed, as the Greeks were, to note the individuality of naked form, had no difficulty in interpreting the language of sculpture. Nor is there even now much difficulty in the task. Our surest guide to the subject of a bas-relief or statue is study of the physical type considered as symbolical of spiritual quality. From the fragment of a torso the true critic can say whether it belongs to the athletic or the erotic species. A limb of Bacchus differs from a limb of Poseidon. The whole psychological conception of Aphrodite Pandemos enters into every muscle, every point, no less than into her physiognomy, her hair, her attitude.

There is, however, a limit to the domain of sculpture. This art deals most successfully with personified generalities. It is also strong in the presentation of incarnate character. But when it attempts to tell a story, we often seek in vain its meaning. Battles of Amazons or Centuars upon bas-reliefs, indeed, are unmistakable. The subject is indicated here by some external sign. The group of Laocoon appeals at once to a reader of Virgil, and the divine vengeance of Leto's children upon Niobe is manifest in the Uffizzi marbles. But who are the several heroes of the Aeginetan pediment, and what was the subject of the Pheidian statues on the Parthenon? Do the three graceful figures of a bas-relief which exists at Naples and in the Villa Albani, represent Orpheus, Hermes, and Eurydice, or Antiope and her two sons? Was the winged and sworded genius upon the Ephesus column meant for a genius of Death or as a genius of Love?

Limitations of sculpture

This dimness of significance indicates the limitation of sculpture, and inclines some of those who feel its charm to assert that the sculptor seeks to convey no intellectual meaning, that he is satisfied with the creation of beautiful form. There is an element of good sense in this revolt against the faith which holds that art is nothing but a mode of spiritual presentation. Truly the artist aims at producing beauty, is satisfied if he conveys delight. But it is impossible to escape from the certainty that, while he is creating forms of beauty, he means something, feels something; and that something, that theme for which he finds the form, is part of the world's spiritual heritage. Only the crudest works of figurative art, capricci and arabesques, have no intellectual content; and even these are good in so far as they convey the playfulness of fancy.

6

Painting

Painting employs colours upon surfaces—walls, panels, canvas. What has been said about sculpture will apply in a great measure to this art. The human form, the world around us, the works of man's hands, are represented in painting, not for their own sake merely, but with the view of bringing thought, feeling, action, home

to the consciousness of the spectator from the artist's consciousness on which they have been impressed. Painting can tell a story better than sculpture, can represent more complicated feelings, can suggest thoughts of a subtler intricacy. Through colour, it can play, like music, directly on powerful but vague emotion. It is deficient in the fulness and roundness of concrete reality. A statue stands before us, the soul incarnate in palpable form, fixed and frozen for eternity. The picture is a reflection cast upon a magic glass; not less permanent, but reduced to shadow of palpable reality. To follow these distinctions farther would be alien from the present purpose. It is enough to repeat that, within their several spheres, according to their several strengths and weaknesses, both sculpture and painting present the spirit to us only as the spirit shows itself immersed in things of sense. The light of a lamp enclosed within an alabaster vase is still lamplight, though shorn of lustre and toned to coloured softness. Even thus the spirit, immersed in things of sense presented to us by the figurative arts, is still spirit, though diminished in its intellectual clearness and invested with hues not its own. To fashion that alabaster form of art with utmost skill, to make it beautiful, to render it transparent, is the artist's function. But he will have failed of the highest if the light within burns dim, or if he gives the world a lamp in which no spiritual flame is lighted.

7

Music

Music transports us to a different region. Like architecture, it imitates nothing. It uses pure sound, and sound of the most wholly artificial kind—so artificial that the musical sounds of one race are unmusical, and therefore unintelligible, to another. Like architecture, music relies upon mathematical proportions. Unlike architecture, music serves no utility. It is the purest art of pleasure—the truest paradise and playground of the spirit. It has less power than painting, even less power than sculpture, to tell a story or to communicate an idea. For we must remember that when music is married to words, the words, and not

the music, reach our thinking faculty. And yet, in spite of all this, music presents man's spirit to itself through form. The domain of the spirit over which music reigns, is emotion—not defined emotion, not feeling even so generally defined as jealousy or anger—but those broad bases of man's being out of which emotions spring, defining themselves through action into this or that set type of feeling. Architecture, we have noticed, is so connected with specific modes of human existence, that from its main examples we can reconstruct the life of men who used it. Sculpture and painting, by limiting their presentation to the imitation of external things, have all the help which experience and association render. The mere artificiality of music's vehicle separates it from life and makes its message untranslatable. Nevertheless, this very disability under which it labours is the secret of its extraordinary potency.

Musical sound, poetic word

To expect clear definition from music—the definition which belongs to poetry—would be absurd. The sphere of music is in sensuous perception; the sphere of poetry is in intelligence. Music, dealing with pure sound, must always be vaguer in significance than poetry, which deals with words. Nevertheless its effect upon the sentient subject may be more intense and penetrating for this very reason. We cannot fail to understand what words are intended to convey; we may very easily interpret in a hundred different ways the message of sound. But this is not because words are wider in their reach and more alive; rather because they are more limited, more stereotyped, more dead. They symbolise something precise and unmistakable; but this precision is itself attenuation of the something symbolised. The exact value of the counter is better understood when it is a word than when it is a chord, because all that a word conveys has already become a thought, while all that musical sounds convey remains within the region of emotion which has not been intellectualised.[1] Poetry touches emotion through the thinking faculty. If music reaches the thinking

[1] "Thought," said Novalis somewhere, "is only a pale, desiccated emotion."

faculty at all, it is through fibres of emotion. But emotion, when it has become thought, has already lost a portion of its force, and has taken to itself a something alien to its nature. Therefore the message of music can never rightly be translated into words. It is the very largeness and vividness of the sphere of simple feeling which makes its symbolical counterpart in sound so seeming vague. But in spite of this incontestable defect of seeming vagueness, an emotion expressed by music is nearer to our sentient self, if we have ears to take it in, than the same emotion limited by language. It is intenser, it is more immediate, as compensation for being less intelligible, less unmistakable in meaning. It is an infinite, an indistinct, where each consciousness defines and sets a limitary form.

Emotional effects of music

Nothing intervenes between the musical work of art and the fibres of the sentient being it immediately thrills. We do not seek to say what music means. We feel the music. And if a man should pretend that the music has not passed beyond his ears, has communicated nothing but a musical delight, he simply tells us that he has not felt music. The ancients on this point were wiser than some moderns when, without pretending to assign an intellectual significance to music, they held it for an axiom that one type of music bred one type of character, another type another. A change in the music of a state, wrote Plato, will be followed by changes in its constitution. It is of the utmost importance, said Aristotle, to provide in education for the use of the ennobling and the fortifying moods. These philosophers knew that music creates a spiritual world, in which the spirit cannot live and move without contracting habits of emotion. In this vagueness of significance but intensity of feeling lies the magic of music. A melody occurs to the composer, which he certainly connects with no act of the reason, which he is probably unconscious of connecting with any movement of his feeling, but which nevertheless is the form in sound of an emotional mood. When he reflects upon the melody secreted thus impromptu, he is aware, as we learn from his own lips, that this work has correspondence with

emotion. Beethoven calls one symphony Heroic, another Pastoral; of the opening of another he says, "Fate knocks at the door." Mozart sets comic words to the mass-music of a friend, in order to mark his sense of its inaptitude for religious sentiment. All composers use phrases like Maestoso, Pomposo, Allegro, Lagrimoso, Con Fuoco, to express the general complexion of the mood their music ought to represent.

8

Dancing and acting

Before passing to poetry, it may be well to turn aside and consider two subordinate arts, which deserve a place in any system of aesthetics. These are dancing and acting. Dancing uses the living human form, and presents feeling or action, the passions and the deeds of men, in artificially educated movements of the body. The element of beauty it possesses, independently of the beauty of the dancer, is rhythm. Acting or the art of mimicry presents the same subject-matter, no longer under the conditions of fixed rhythm, but as an ideal reproduction of reality. The actor is what he represents, and the element of beauty in his art is perfection of realisation. It is his duty as an artist to show us Orestes or Othello, not perhaps exactly as Othello and Orestes were, but as the essence of their tragedies, ideally incorporate in action, ought to be. The actor can do this in dumb show. Some of the greatest actors of the ancient world were mimes. But he usually interprets a poet's thought, and attempts to present an artistic conception in a secondary form of art, which has for its advantage his own personality in play.

9

Poetry

The last of the fine arts is literature; or, in the narrower sphere of which it will be well to speak here only, is poetry. Poetry employs words in fixed rhythms, which we call metres. Only a small portion of its effect is derived from the beauty of its sound. It appeals to the sense of hearing far less immediately than music does. It makes no appeal to the eyesight, and takes no help from the beauty of colour. It produces no palpable, tangible object.

But language being the storehouse of all human experience, language being the medium whereby spirit communicates with spirit in affairs of life, the vehicle which transmits to us the thoughts and feelings of the past, and on which we rely for continuing our present to the future, it follows that, of all the arts, poetry soars highest, flies widest, and is most at home in the region of the spirit. What poetry lacks of sensuous fulness, it more than balances by intellectual intensity. Its significance is unmistakable, because it employs the very material men use in their exchange of thoughts and correspondence of emotions. To the bounds of its empire there is no end. It embraces in its own more abstract being all the arts. By words it does the work in turn of architecture, sculpture, painting, music. It is the metaphysic of the fine arts. Philosophy finds place in poetry; and life itself, refined to its last utterance, hangs trembling on this thread which joins our earth to heaven, this bridge between experience and the realms where unattainable and imperceptible will have no meaning.

Poetry as expression

If we are right in defining art as the manifestation of the human spirit to man by man in beautiful form, poetry, more incontestably than any other art, fulfils this definition and enables us to gauge its accuracy. For words are the spirit, manifested to itself in symbols with no sensual alloy. Poetry is therefore the presentation, through words, of life and all that life implies. Perception, emotion, thought, action, find in descriptive, lyrical, reflective, dramatic, and epical poetry their immediate apocalypse. In poetry we are no longer puzzled with problems as to whether art has or has not of necessity a spiritual content. There cannot be any poetry whatsoever without a spiritual meaning of some sort: good or bad, moral, immoral, or non-moral, obscure or lucid, noble or ignoble, slight or weighty—such distinctions do not signify. In poetry we are not met by questions whether the poet intended to convey a meaning when he made it. Quite meaningless poetry (as some critics would fain find melody quite meaningless, or a statue meaningless, or a Venetian picture meaningless) is a contradiction in terms. In poetry, life, or a portion of life,

Poetry must have meaning

lives again, resuscitated and presented to our mental faculty through art. The best poetry is that which reproduces the most of life, or its intensest moments. Therefore the extensive species of the drama and the epic, the intensive species of the lyric, have been ever held in highest esteem. Only a paradoxical critic maintains the thesis that poetry is excellent in so far as it assimilates the vagueness of music, or estimates a poet by his power of translating sense upon the border-land of nonsense into melodious words. Where poetry falls short in the comparison with other arts, is in the quality of form-giving, in the quality of sensuous concreteness. Poetry can only present forms to the mental eye and to the intellectual sense, stimulate the physical senses by indirect suggestion. Therefore dramatic poetry, the most complicated kind of poetry, relies upon the actor; and lyrical poetry, the intensest kind of poetry, seeks the aid of music. But these comparative deficiencies are overbalanced, for all the highest purposes of art, by the width and depth, the intelligibility and power, the flexibility and multitudinous assocations of language. The other arts are limited in what they utter. There is nothing which has entered into the life of man which poetry cannot express. Poetry says everything in man's own language to the mind. The other arts appeal imperatively, each in its own region, to man's senses; and the mind receives art's message by the help of symbols from the world of sense. Poetry lacks this immediate appeal to sense. But the elixir which it offers to the mind, its quintessence extracted from all things of sense, reacts through intellectual perception upon all the faculties that make men what they are.

Artist as form-giver

I used a metaphor in one of the foregoing paragraphs to indicate the presence of the vital spirit, the essential element of thought or feeling, in the work of art. I said it radiated through the form, as lamplight through an alabaster vase. Now the skill of the artist is displayed in modelling that vase, in giving it shape, rich and rare, and fashioning its curves with subtlest workmanship. In so far as he is a craftsman, the artist's pains must be bestowed upon this precious vessel of the animating theme. In

so far as he has power over beauty, he must exert it in this plastic act. It is here that he displays dexterity; here that he creates; here that he separates himself from other men who think and feel. The poet, more perhaps than any other artist, needs to keep this steadily in view; for words being our daily vehicle of utterance, it may well chance that the alabaster vase of language should be hastily or trivially modelled. This is the true reason why "neither gods nor men nor the columns either suffer mediocrity in singers." Upon the poet it is specially incumbent to see that he has something rare to say and some rich mode of saying it. The figurative arts need hardly be so cautioned. They run their risk in quite a different direction. For sculptor and for painter, the danger is lest he should think that alabaster vase his final task. He may too easily be satisfied with moulding a beautiful but empty form.

THE ESSENTIALS OF DRAMA

By GEORGE PIERCE BAKER

What is the common aim of all dramatists? Twofold: first, as promptly as possible to win the attention of the audience; secondly, to hold that interest steady or, better, to increase it till the final curtain falls. It is the time limit to which all dramatists are subject which makes the immediate winning of attention necessary. The dramatist has no time to waste. How is he to win this attention? By what is done in the play; by characterization; by the language the people of his play speak; or by a combination of two or more of these. Today we hear much discussion whether it is what is done, *i. e.,* action, or characterization, or dialogue which most interests a public. Which is the chief essential in good drama? History shows indisputably that the

Action in drama

These selections from *Dramatic Technique* by George Pierce Baker, 1919, are used by permission of and by special arrangement with Houghton Mifflin Company, the authorized publishers. The author is Professor of English at Harvard and widely known as a teacher of play-making. Among his publications is the *Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist,* 1907.

One owes it to the author of *Dramatic Technique* to quote briefly from *Pieces of Hate,* a recent volume (Doran, 1922), by Mr. Heywood Broun, the *World* critic and now a novelist. "A great many persons speak and write about Professor George Pierce Baker, of Harvard, as if he were a sort of agitator who made a practice of luring young men away from productive labor to write bad plays. There is no denying the fact that a certain number of dramatists have come out of Harvard's English 47, but the course also has a splendid record of cures. . . . . Professor Baker deserves the thanks of the community, then, not only for Edward Sheldon, and Cleves Kincaid, and Miss Lincoln, and Eugene O'Neill, and some of the other playwrights who came from English 47, but also for the number of excellent young men who have gone straight from his class-room to Wall Street, and the ministry, and automobile accessories with all the nascent enthusiasm of men just liberated from a great delusion. . . . . When I was in English 47 I remember that all our plays dealt with Life. At that, none of us regarded it very highly. Few respected it and certainly no one was in favor of it. . . . . Some of the playwrights in English 47 said that Life was a terrific tragedy. In their plays the hero shot himself, or the heroine, or both, as the circumstances might warrant, in the last act. The opposing school held that Life was a joke, a grim jest to be sure, cosmic rather than comic, but still mirthful. The plays of these authors ended with somebody ordering 'Another small bottle of Pommery,' and laughing mockingly, like a world-wise cynic."—*Pieces of Hate,* pp. 202-4.

drama in its beginnings, no matter where we look, depended most on action. The earliest extant specimen of drama in England, *circa* 967, shows clearly the essential relations of action, characterization, and dialogue in drama at its outset. (Professor Baker here quotes the English *Quem Quaeritis,* from *Early Plays,* ed. by C. G. Child. Houghton Mifflin Company.)

Obviously in this little play the directions for imitative movement fill three quarters of the space; dialogue fills one quarter; characterization, except as the accompanying music may very faintly have suggested it, there is none. Historically studied, the English drama shows that characterization appeared as an added interest when the interest of action was already well established. The value of dialogue for its own sake was recognized even later.

What is true of the English drama is of course equally true of all Continental drama which, like the English drama, had its origin in the Trope and the Miracle Play. Even, however, if we go farther back, to the origin of Greek Drama in the Ballad Dance we shall find the same results.

Ballad dance

The Ballad Dance consisted "in the combination of speech, music, and that imitative gesture which, for lack of a better word, we are obliged to call dancing. It is very important, however, to guard against modern associations with this term. Dances in which men and women joined are almost unknown to Greek antiquity, and to say of a guest at a banquet that he danced would suggest intoxication. The real dancing of the Greeks is a lost art, of which the modern ballet is a corruption, and the orator's action a faint survival. It was an art which used bodily motion to convey thought: as in speech the tongue articulated words, so in dancing the body swayed and gesticulated into meaning. . . . In epic poetry, where thought takes the form of simple narrative, the speech (Greek *epos*) of the Ballad Dance triumphs over the other two elements. Lyric poetry consists in meditation or highly wrought description taking such forms as odes, sonnets, hymns, —poetry that lends itself to elaborate rhythms and other devices of musical art: here the music is the element of the Ballad Dance which has come to the front. And the imitative gesture

has triumphed over the speech and the music in the case of the third branch of poetry; drama is thought expressed in action."[1]

Imitative movement is the drama of the savage.

"An Aleut, who was armed with a bow, represented a hunter, another a bird. The former expressed by gestures how very glad he was he had found so fine a bird; nevertheless he would not kill it. The other imitated the motions of a bird seeking to escape the hunter. He at last, after a long delay, pulled his bow and shot: the bird reeled, fell, and died. The hunter danced for joy; but finally he became troubled, repented having killed so fine a bird, and lamented it. Suddenly the dead bird rose, turned into a beautiful woman, and fell into the hunter's arms."[2]

Physical action essential

Look where we will, then,—at the beginnings of drama in Greece, in England centuries later, or among savage peoples today—the chief essential in winning and holding the attention of the spectator was imitative movement by the actors, that is, physical action. Nor, as the drama develops, does physical action cease to be central. The most elaborate of the Miracle Plays, the Towneley *Second Shepherd's Play* and the Brome *Abraham and Isaac*[3] prove this. In the former we are of course interested in the characterization of the Shepherds and Mak, but would this hold us without the stealing of the sheep and the varied action attending its concealment and discovery in the house of Mak? Undoubtedly in the *Abraham and Isaac* characterization counts for more, but we have the journey to the Mount, the preparations for the sacrifice, the binding of the boy's eyes, the repeatedly upraised sword, the farewell embracings, the very dramatic coming of the Angel, and the joyful sacrifice of the sheep when the child is released. Without all this central action, the fine characterization of the play

[1]*The Ancient Classical Drama,* pp. 3-4. R. G. Moulton. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

[2]Quoted in *The Development of the Drama,* pp. 10-11. Copyright, 1903, by Brander Matthews. Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York.

[3]For these two plays see *Early Plays.* Riverside Literature Series. C. G. Child. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

would lose its significance. In Shakespeare's day, audiences again and again, as they watched plays of Dekker, Heywood, and many another dramatist, willingly accepted inadequate characterization and weak dialogue so long as the action was absorbing. Just this interest in, for instance, *The Four Prentices,* or the various *Ages*[1] of Thomas Heywood, was burlesqued by Francis Beaumont in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle.* It may be urged that the plays of Racine and Corneille, as well as the Restoration Comedy in England, show characterization and dialogue predominant. It should be remembered, however, that Corneille and Racine, as well as the Restoration writers of comedy wrote primarily for the Court group and not for the public at large. Theirs was the cultivated audience of the time, proud of its special literary and dramatic standards. Around and about these dramatists were the writers of popular entertainment, which depended on action. In England, we must remember that Wycherley and Vanbrugh, who are by no means without action in their plays, belong to Restoration Comedy as much as Etherege or Congreve, and that the Heroic Drama, in which action was absolutely central, divided the favor of even the Court public with the Comedy of Manners. The fact is, the history of the Drama shows that only rarely does even a group of people for a brief time care more for plays of characterization and dialogue than for plays of action. Throughout the ages, the great public, cultivated as well as uncultivated, have cared for action first, then, as aids to a better understanding of the action of the story, for characterization and dialogue. Now, for more than a century, the play of mere action has been so popular that it has been recognized as a special form, namely, melodrama. This type of play, in which characterization and dialogue have usually been entirely subordinated to action, has been the most widely attended. Today the motion picture show has driven mere melodrama from our theatres, yet who will deny that the "movie" in its present form subordinates everything to action? Even the most ambitious specimens, such as *Cabiria* and *The Birth of a Nation,* finding their audiences restless under fre-

[1] *Works.* 6 vols. Pearson, London.

quent use of the explanatory "titles" which make clear what cannot be clearly shown in action, hasten to depict some man hunt, some daring leap from a high cliff into the sea, or a wild onrush of galloping white-clad figures of the Ku Klux Klan. From the practice of centuries the feeling that action is really central in drama has become instinctive with most persons who write plays without preconceived theories. Watch a child making his first attempt at play-writing. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the play will contain little except action. There will be slight characterization, if any, and the dialogue will be mediocre at best. The young writer has depended almost entirely upon action because instinctively, when he thinks of drama, he thinks of action.

Emotion in drama

Nor, if we paused to consider, is this dependence of drama upon action surprising. "From emotions to emotions" is the formula for any good play. To paraphrase a principle of geometry, "A play is the shortest distance from emotions to emotions." The emotions to be reached are those of the audience. The emotions conveyed are those of the people on the stage or of the dramatist as he has watched the people represented. Just herein lies the importance of action for the dramatist: it is his quickest means of arousing emotion in an audience. Which is more popular with the masses, the man of action or the thinker? The world at large believes, and rightly that, as a rule, "Actions speak louder than words." The dramatist knows that not what a man thinks he thinks, but what at a crisis he does, instinctively, spontaneously, best shows his character. The dramatist knows, too, that though we may think, when discussing patriotism in the abstract, that we have firm ideas about it, what reveals our real beliefs is our action at a crisis in the history of our country. Many believed from the talk of German Socialists that they would not support their Government in the case of war. Their actions have shown far more clearly than their words their real beliefs. Ulster sounded as hostile as possible to England not long ago, but when the call upon her loyalty came she did not prove false. Is it any wonder, then, that popular vote has declared action the best revealer of feeling and, there-

fore, that the dramatist, in writing his plays, depends first of all upon action? If any one is disposed to cavil at action as popular merely with the masses and the less cultivated, let him ask himself, "What, primarily in other people interests me—what these people do or why they do it?" Even if he belong to the group, relatively very small in the mass of humanity, most interested by "Why did these people do this?" he must admit that till he knows clearly what the people did, he cannot take up the question which more interests him. For the majority of auditors, action is of first importance in drama: even for the group which cares far more for characterization and dialogue it is necessary as preparing the way for that characterization and dialogue on which they insist.

Consider for a moment the nature of the attention which a dramatist may arouse. Of course it may be only of the same sort which an audience gives a lecturer on a historical or scientific subject,—a readiness to hear and to try to understand what he has to present,—close but unemotional attention. Comparatively few people, however, are capable of sustained attention when their emotions are not called upon. How many lectures last over an hour? Is not the "popular lecturer" popular largely because he works into his lecture many anecdotes and dramatic illustrations in order to avoid or to lighten the strain of close, sustained attention? There is, undoubtedly, a public which can listen to ideas with the same keen enjoyment which most auditors feels when listening to something which stirs them emotionally, but as compared with the general public it is infinitesimal. Understanding this, the dramatist stirs the emotions of his hearers by the most concrete means at his command, his quickest communication from brain to brain,—action just for itself or illustrating character. The inferiority to action of mere exposition as a creator of interest the two following extracts show.

ACT I. SCENE 1. *Britain. The garden of Cymbeline's palace*
Enter two gentlemen

1. Gent. You do not meet a man but frowns. Our bloods
No more obey the heavens than our courtiers
Still seem as does the King.
2. Gent. But what's the matter?

1. Gent. His daughter, and the heir of's kingdom, whom
He purpos'd to his wife's sole son—a widow
That late he married—hath referred herself
Unto a poor but worthy gentleman. She's wedded,
Her husband banish'd, she imprison'd; all
Is outward sorrow; though I think the King
Be touched at very heart.
2. Gent. None but the King?
1. Gent. He that hath lost her too; so is the Queen,
That most desir'd the match: but not a courtier,
Although they wear their faces to the bent
Of the King's look, hath a heart that is not
Glad at the thing they scowl at.
2. Gent. And why so?
1. Gent. He that hath miss'd the Princess is a thing
Too bad for bad report; and he that hath her—
I mean, that married her, alack, good man!
And therefore banish'd—is a creature such
As, to seek through the regions of the earth
For one his like, there would be something failing
In him that should compare. I do not think
So fair an outward, and such stuff within
Endows a man but he.
2. Gent. You speak him far.
1. Gent. I do extend him, sir, within himself,
Crush him together rather than unfold
His measure duly.
2. Gent. What's his name and birth?
1. Gent. I cannot delve him to the root. His father—etc.[1]

Here Shakespeare trusts mere exposition to rouse interest. His speakers merely question and answer, showing little characterization and practically no emotion. Is this extract as interesting as the following?

[1]*Cymbeline,* Act 1, Scene 1.

Fitz Urse. (*Catches hold of the last flying monk.*) Where is the traitor Becket?
Becket. Here.
No traitor to the King, but Priest of God,
Primate of England. (*Descending into the transept.*)
I am he ye seek.
What would ye have of me?
Fitz Urse. Your life.
De Tracy. Your life.
De Morville. Save that you will absolve the bishops.
Becket. Never,—
Except they make submission to the Church.
You had my answer to that cry before.
De Morville. Why, then you are a dead man; flee!
Becket. I will not.
I am readier to be slain that thou to slay.

[1]*Cymbeline,* Act 1, Scene 1.

Hugh, I know well that thou hast but half a heart
To bathe this sacred pavement with my blood.
God pardon thee and these, but God's full curse
Shatter you all to pieces if ye harm
One of my flock!

Fitz Urse. Seize him and carry him!
Come with us—nay—thou art our prisoner—come!
(*Fitz Urse lays hold of Archbishop's pall.*)

Becket. Down!
(*Throws him headlong.*)

De Morville. Ay, make him prisoner, do not harm the man.

Fitz Urse. (*Advances with drawn sword.*) I told thee that I should remember thee!

Becket. Profligate pander!

Fitz Urse. Do you hear that? Strike, strike.
(*Strikes the Archbishop and wounds him in the forehead.*)

Becket. (*Covers his eyes with his hand.*) I do commend my cause to God.

Fitz Urse. Strike him, Tracy!

Rosamund. (*Rushing down the steps from the choir.*) No, no, no, no. Mercy, Mercy.
As you would hope for mercy.

Fitz Urse. Strike, I say.

Grim. O, God, O, noble knight, O, sacrilege!

Fitz Urse. Strike! I say.

De Tracy. There is my answer then.
(*Sword falls on Grim's arm, and glances from it, wounding Becket.*)
This last to rid thee of a world of brawls!

Becket. (*Falling on his knees.*) Into thy hands, O Lord—into thy hands—!
(*Sinks prone.*)

De Brito. The traitor's dead, and will arise no more.
(*De Brito, De Tracy, Fitz Urse rush out, crying "King's men!" De Morville follows slowly. Flashes of lightning through the Cathedral. Rosamund seen kneeling at the body of Becket.*)[1]

The physical action of this extract instantly grips attention. Interested at once by this action, shortly we rush on unthinking, but feeling more and more intensely. In this extract action is everywhere. The actionless *Cymbeline* is undramatic. This extract is intensely dramatic.

Just what, however, is this action which in drama is so essential? To most people it means physical or bodily action which rouses sympathy or dislike in an audience. The action of melodrama certainly exists largely for itself. We expect and get little but physical action for its own sake when a play is announced as was the well-known melodrama, *A Race for Life.*

[1] *Becket: A Tragedy.* Lord Tennyson. Arranged for the stage by Henry Irving. Macmillan & Co., London and New York.

As Melodramatically and Masterfully Stirring, Striking and Sensational as Phil Sheridan's Famous Ride.

Superb, Stupendous Scenes in Sunset Regions.
Wilderness Wooings Where Wild Roses Grow.
The Lights and Shades of Rugged Border Life.
Chinese Comedy to Make Confucius Chuckle.
The Realism of the Ranch and Race Track.
The Hero Horse That Won a Human Life.
An Equine Beauty Foils a Murderous Beast.
Commingled Gleams of Gladness, Grief, and Guilt.
Dope, Dynamite and Devilish Treachery Distanced.
Continuous Climaxes That Come Like Cloudbursts.

Some plays depend almost wholly upon mere bustle and rapidly shifting movement, much of it wholly unnecessary to the plot. Large portions of many recent musical comedies illustrate this. Such unnecessary but crudely effective movement Stevenson burlesqued more than once in the stage directions of his *Macaire*.

ACT I. SCENE 1

Aline and maids; to whom Fiddlers; afterwards Dumont and Charles. As the curtain rises, the sound of the violin is heard approaching. Aline and the inn servants, who are discovered laying the table, dance up to door L. C., to meet the Fiddlers, who enter likewise dancing to their own music. Air: "Haste to the Wedding." The Fiddlers exeunt playing into house, R. U. E. Aline and Maids dance back to table, which they proceed to arrange.

Aline. Well, give me fiddles: fiddles and a wedding feast. It tickles your heart till your heels make a runaway match of it. I don't mind extra work, I don't, so long as there's fun about it. Hand me up that pile of plates. The quinces there, before the bride. Stick a pink in the Notary's glass: that's the girl he's courting.

Dumont. (*Entering with Charles.*) Good girls, good girls! Charles, in ten minutes from now what happy faces will smile around that board!

ACT II. SCENE 2

To these all the former characters, less the Notary. The fiddlers are heard without, playing dolefully. Air: "O, dear, what can the matter be?" in time to which the procession enters.

Macaire. Well, friends, what cheer?
Aline. No wedding, no wedding! *Together*
Goriot. I told 'ee he can't, and he can't!
Dumont. Dear, dear me.
Ernestine. They won't let us marry. *Together*
Charles. No wife, no father, no nothing.
Curate. The facts have justified the worst anticipations of our absent friend, the Notary.
Macaire. I perceive I must reveal myself.[1]

Not all physical action dramatic

If physical action in and of itself is so often dramatic, is all physical action dramatic? That is, does it always create emotion in an onlooker? No. It goes for naught unless it rouses his interest. Of itself, or because of the presentation given it by the dramatist, it must rouse in the onlooker an emotional response. A boy seeing "Crazy Mary" stalking the street in bedizened finery and bowing right and left, may see nothing interesting in her. More probably her actions will move him to jeer and jibe at her. Let some spectator, however, tell the boy of the tragedy in Crazy Mary's younger life which left her unbalanced, and, if he has any right feeling, the boy attitude will begin to change. He may even give over the jeering he has begun. Reveal to him exactly what is passing in the crazed mind of the woman, and his mere interest will probably turn to sympathy. Characterization, preceding and accompanying action, creates sympathy or repulsion for the figure or figures involved. This sympathy or repulsion in turn converts mere interest into emotional response of the keenest kind. Though physical action is undoubtedly fundamental in drama, no higher form than crude melodrama or crude farce can develop till characterization appears to explain and interpret action.

The following extracts from Robertson's *Home* show physical action, silly it is true, yet developing characterization by illustrative action.. The first, even as it amuses, characterizes the timid Bertie, and the second shows the mild mentality and extreme confusion of the two central figures.

Mr. Dorrison. Will you give Mrs. Pinchbeck your arm, Colonel? Dora, my dear. (*Taking Dora's.*) Lucy, Captain Mountraffe will—(*Sees him asleep.*) Ah, Lucy, you must follow by yourself.

(*Colonel takes off Mrs. Pinchbeck; Dorrison, Dora. At that moment, Bertie enters window, R., and runs to Lucy, kneels at her feet, and is about to kiss her hand. Mountraffe yawns, which frightens Bertie. He is running off as the drop falls quickly.*)

End of Act I

Colonel. I'd always give my eyes to be alone with this girl for five minutes, and whenever I am alone with her, I haven't a word to say for myself. (*Aloud.*) That music, Miss Thornhaugh?

Dora. (*At piano.*) Yes.

[1]*Macaire.* By R. L. Stevenson and W. E. Henley. Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York. Copyright, 1895, by Stone & Kimball, Chicago.

Col. (*Aside.*) As if it could be anything else. How stupid of me. (*Aloud.*) New music?

Dora. Yes.

Col. New laid—I mean, fresh from the country—fresh from London, or—yes—I—(*Dora sits on music stool at piano. This scene is played with great constraint on both sides. Colonel bends over Dora at piano.*) Going to play any of it now?

Dora. No. I must practise it first. I can't play at sight.

Col. Can't you really? Don't you believe in—music—at first sight?

(*Dora drops a music book. Colonel picks it up. Dora tries to pick it up. They knock their heads together; mutual confusion. As they rise, each has hold of the book.*)

Dora. } I beg your pardon. (*Both trembling.*)
Col. }

Dora. It's nothing.

Col. Nothing, quite so.

(*Dora sits on music stool. As she does so, both leave hold of the book and it falls again.*)

Dora. I thought you had the book.

Col. (*Picking it up.*) And I thought you had it, and it appears that neither of us had it. Ha! ha! (*Aside.*) Fool that I am! (*Dora sits thoughtfully, Colonel bending over her; a pause.*) Won't you play something?

Dora. I don't know how to play.

Col. Oh, well, play the other one. (*They resume their attitudes; a pause.*) The weather has been very warm today, has it not?

Dora. Very.

Col. Looks like thunder to me.

Dora. Does it?

Col. Are you fond of thunder—I mean fond of music? I should say are you fond of lightning? (*Dora touches keys of piano mechanically.*) Do play something.

Dora. No, I—I didn't think of what I was doing. What were you talking about?

Col. About? You—me—no! About thunder—music—I mean lightning.

Dora. I'm afraid of lightning. (Act II.)[1]

The first scene of Act I of *Romeo and Juliet* is full of interesting physical action—quarrels, fighting, and the halting of the fight by the angry Prince. The physical action, however, characterizes in every instance, from the servants of the two factions to Tybalt, Benvolio, the Capulets, the Montagues, and the Prince. Moreover, this interesting physical action, which is all the more interesting because it characterizes, is interesting in the third place because in every instance it helps to an understanding of the story. It shows so intense an enmity between the two houses that even the servants cannot meet in the streets without quarreling. By its characterization it prepares for the parts Benvolio and Tybalt are to play in later

[1]R. M. DeWitt, New York City.

scenes. It motivates the edict of banishment which is essential if the tragedy of the play is to occur.

SCENE 1. *Verona. A public place*

Enter Sampson and Gregory, of the house of Capulet, with swords and bucklers

Sampson. Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.
Gregory. No, for then we should be colliers.
Sam. I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.
Gre. Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar.
Sam. I strike quickly, being mov'd.
Gre. But thou are not quickly mov'd to strike.
Sam. A dog of the house of Montague moves me.
Draw thy tool; here comes two of the house of Montague.

. . . . . .

Sam. My naked weapon is out. Quarrel, I will back thee.
Enter two other serving-men. (*Abraham and Balthasar.*)
Gre. How! turn thy back and run?
Sam. Fear me not.
Gre. No, marry; I fear thee!
Sam. Let us take the law of our sides; let them begin.
Gre. I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.
Sam. Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them; which is disgrace to them if they bare it.
Abraham. Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?
Sam. I do bite my thumb, sir.
Abr. Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?
Sam. (*Aside to Gre.*) Is the law of our side, if I say ay?
Gre. No.
Sam. No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir; but I bite my thumb, sir.
Gre. Do you quarrel, sir?
Abr. Quarrel, sir? No, sir.
Sam. But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you.
Abr. No better.
Sam. Well, sir.

Enter Benvolio.

Gre. Say "better"; here comes one of my master's kinsmen.
Sam. Yes, better, sir.
Abr. You lie.
Sam. Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy swashing blow. (*They fight.*)

Benvolio. Part, fools!
Put up your swords; you know not what you do.
(*Beats down their swords.*)

Enter Tybalt

Tybalt. What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?
Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.
Ben. I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword,
Or manage it to part these men with me.
Tyb. What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.
Have at thee, coward! (*They fight.*)

Enter three or four citizens, and officers, with clubs or partisans

Officer. Clubs, bills, and partisans! Strike! Beat them down!
Down with the Capulets! down with the Montagues!

Enter Capulet in his gown and Lady Capulet

Capulet. What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!
Lady Capulet. A crutch, a crutch! Why call you for a sword?
Cap. My sword, I say! Old Montague is come,
And flourishes his blade in spite of me.

Enter Montague and Lady Montague.

Montague. Thou villain, Capulet,—Hold me not, let me go.
Lady Montague. Thou shalt not stir me one foot to seek a foe.

Enter Prince, with his train

Prince. Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,—etc.

Even physical action, then, may interest for itself, or because it characterizes, or because it helps on the story, or for two or more of these reasons.

If we examine other extracts from famous plays we shall, however, find ourselves wondering whether action in drama must not mean something besides mere physical action. In the opening scene of *La Princesse Georges,* by Dumas fils, the physical action is neither large in amount nor varied, but the scene is undeniably dramatic, for emotions represented create prompt emotional response in us.

ACT I. SCENE 1

A Drawing Room

Severine, watching near the window, with the curtain drawn a little aside, then Rosalie

Severine. Rosalie! At last! What a night I have gone through!
Sixteen hours of waiting! (*To Rosalie, who enters.*) Well?
Rosalie. Madame, the Princess must be calm.
Severine. Don't call me Princess. That's wasting time.
Rosalie. Madame has not slept?
Severine. No.
Rosalie. I suspected as much.
Severine. Tell me, is it true?
Rosalie. Yes.
Severine. The details, then.
Rosalie. Well, then, last evening I followed the Prince, who went to the Western Railway, as he had told Madame that he would do, to take a train at half past nine; only, instead of buying a ticket for Versailles, he took one for Rouen.
Severine. But he was alone.
Rosalie. Yes. But five minutes after he arrived, she came.
Severine. Who was the woman?
Rosalie. Alas, Madame knows her better than I!
Severine. It is some one whom I know!
Rosalie. Yes.
Severine. Not one of those women?—

Rosalie. It is one of your intimate friends, of the best social position.

Severine. Valentine? Bertha? No.—The Baroness?

Rosalie. The Countess Sylvanie.

Severine. She! Impossible! She stayed here, with me, until at least nine o'clock. We dined alone together.

Rosalie. She was making sure that you didn't suspect anything?

Severine. Indeed, nothing. And she came to the train at what hour?

Rosalie. At twenty-five minutes past nine.

Severine. So, in twenty-five minutes—

Rosalie. She went home; she changed her dress (she arrived all in black); she went to the St. Lazare Station. It is true that only your garden and hers separate her house from yours; that she has the best horses in Paris; and that she is accustomed to doing this sort of thing, if I may believe what I have heard.

Severine. To what a pass we have come! My most intimate friend! Did they speak to each other?[1]

This scene wins our attention because it reveals in Severine a mental state which in itself interests and moves us far more than the mere physical action.

What has been said of *La Princesse Georges* is even more true of the ending of Marlowe's *Faustus.*

Faustus. Ah, Faustus.
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come;
Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!
O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus will be damn'd.
.....All beasts are happy,
For when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements;
But mine must live still to be plagu'd in hell.
Curs'd be the parents that engender'd me!
No, Faustus, curse thyself, curse Lucifer
That hath deprived thee of the joys of heaven.
(*The clock strikes twelve.*)
O, it strikes, it strikes! Now body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell!
(*Thunder and lightning.*)
O, soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!
Enter Devils
My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!—Ah, Mephistophilis!
(*Exeunt Devils with Faustus.*)[2]

[1] *Théâtre Complet,* vol. v. Dumas fils. Calman Levy, Paris.

[2] Marlowe's *Faustus,* Act v. Mermaid Series or Everyman's Library.

Though this scene doubtless requires physical action as the tortured Faustus flings himself about the stage, would that action be clear enough to move us greatly were it not for the characterization of the preceding scenes and the masterly phrasing which exactly reveals the tortured soul? Is it not a mental state rather than physical action which moves us here? Surely.

Mental action

The fact is, the greatest drama of all time, and the larger part of the drama of the past twenty years, uses action much less for its own sake than to reveal mental states which are to rouse sympathy or repulsion in an audience. In brief, marked mental activity may be quite as dramatic as mere physical action. Hamlet may sit quietly by his fire as he speaks the soliloquy "To be, or not to be," yet by what we already know of him and what the lines reveal we are moved to the deepest sympathy for his tortured state. There is almost no physical movement as Percinet reads to Sylvette from *Romeo and Juliet* in the opening pages of Rostand's *Romancers,* yet we are amused and pleased by their excited delight.

ACT I

The stage is cut in two by an old wall, mossy and garlanded by luxurious vines. To the right, a corner of Bergamin's park; to the left a corner of Pasquinot's. On each side, against the wall, a bench.

SCENE 1. Sylvette. Percinet. When the curtain rises, Percinet is seated on the wall, with a book on his knees, from which he is reading to Sylvette. She stands on the bench in her father's park, her chin in her hands, her elbows against the wall, listening attentively.

Sylvette. O Monsieur Percinet, how beautiful it is!

Percinet. Isn't it? Hear Romeo's reply (*He reads.*)

"It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale; look, love what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:
Night's candles are burnt out and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops:
I must be gone. . . ."

Sylvette. (*Alert, with animation.*) Sh!

Percinet. (*Listens a moment, then*) No one! So, mademoiselle, don't have the air of an affrighted birdling on a branch, ready to spread wing at the slightest sound. Hear the immortal lovers talking:

She. "Yon light is not day-light, I know it, I:
It is some meteor that the sun exhales,
To be to thee this night a torch bearer."

He. "Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say yon gray is not the morning's eye;
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our heads;
I have more care to stay than will to go:
Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so."

Sylvette. Oh, no! I won't have him talk of that; if he does, I shall cry.

Percinet. Then we'll shut our book till tomorrow, and, since you wish it, let sweet Romeo live.

(*He closes the book and looks about him.*)

What an adorable spot! It seems made for lulling one's self with the lines of the great William.[1]

Here is great activity, but it is mental rather than physical action. To make it rouse us to the desired emotional response, good characterization and wisely chosen words are necessary.

Examine also the opening scene of Maeterlinck's *The Blind.* A group of sightless people have been deserted in a wood by their guide, and consequently are so bewildered and timorous that they hardly dare move. Yet all their trepidation, doubt, and awe are clearly conveyed to us, with a very small amount of physical action, through skilful characterization, and words specially chosen and ordered to create and intensify emotion in us.

An ancient Norland forest, with an eternal look, under a sky of deep stars.

In the centre and in the deep of the night, a very old priest is sitting, wrapped in a great black cloak. The chest and the head, gently upturned and deathly motionless, rest against the trunk of a giant hollow oak. The face is fearsome pale and of an immovable waxen lividness, in which the purple lips fall slightly apart. The dumb, fixed eyes no longer look out from the visible side of Eternity and seem to bleed with immemorial sorrows and with tears. The hair, of a solemn whiteness, falls in stringy locks, stiff and few, over a face more illuminated and more weary than all that surrounds it in the watchful stillness of that melancholy wood. The hands, pitifully thin, are clasped rigidly over the thighs.

On the right, six old men, all blind, are sitting on stones, stumps, and dead leaves.

On the left, separated from them by an uprooted tree and fragments of rock, six women, also blind, are sitting opposite the old men. Three among them pray and mourn without ceasing, in a muffled voice. Another is old in the extreme. The fifth, in an attitude of mute insanity, holds on her knees a little sleeping child. The sixth is strangely young and her whole body is drenched with her beautiful hair. They, as well as the old men, are all clad in the same ample and sombre garments. Most of

[1] *The Romancers.* Translated by Mary Hendee. Doubleday & McClure Co., New York.

them are waiting, with their elbows on their knees and their faces in their hands; and all seem to have lost the habit of ineffectual gesture and no longer turn their heads at the stifled and uneasy noises of the Island. Tall funereal trees,—yews, weeping-willows, cypresses,—cover them with their faithful shadows. A cluster of long, sickly asphodels is in bloom, not far from the priest, in the night. It is unusually oppressive, despite the moonlight that here and there struggles to pierce for an instant the glooms of the foliage.

First Blind Man. (*Who was born blind.*) He hasn't come back yet?

Second Blind Man. (*Who also was born blind.*) You have awakened me.

First Blind Man. I was sleeping, too.

Third Blind Man. (*Also born blind.*) I was sleeping, too.

Second Blind Man. I hear something coming.

First Blind Man. He hasn't come yet?

Third Blind Man. It is time to go back to the Asylum.

First Blind Man. We ought to find out where we are.

Second Blind Man. It has grown cold since he left.

First Blind Man. We ought to find out where we are!

The Very Old Blind Man. Does any one know where we are?

The Very Old Blind Woman. We were walking a very long while; we must be a long way from the Asylum.

First Blind Man. Oh! the women are opposite us?

The Very Old Blind Woman. We are sitting opposite you.

First Blind Man. Wait, I am coming over where you are. (*He rises and gropes in the dark.*) Where are you?—Speak! let me hear where you are!

The Very Old Blind Woman. Here; we are sitting on stones.

First Blind Man. (*Advances and stumbles against the fallen tree and the rocks.*) There is something between us.

Second Blind Man. We had better keep our places.

Third Blind Man. Where are you sitting?—Will you come over by us?

The Very Old Blind Woman. We dare not rise!

Third Blind Man. Why did he separate us?

First Blind Man. I hear praying on the women's side.

Second Blind Man. Yes; the three old women are praying.

First Blind Man. This is no time for prayer!

Second Blind Man. You will pray soon enough, in the dormitory!

(*The three old women continue their prayers.*)

Third Blind Man. I should like to know who it is I am sitting by.

Second Blind Man. I think I am next to you.

(*They feel about them.*)

Third Blind Man. We can't reach each other.

First Blind Man. Nevertheless, we are not far apart. (*He feels about him and strikes with his staff the fifth blind man, who utters a muffled groan.*) The one who cannot hear is beside us.

Second Blind Man. I don't hear anybody; we were six just now.

First Blind Man. I am going to count. Let us question the women, too; we must know what to depend upon. I hear the three old women praying all the time; are they together?

The Very Old Blind Women. They are sitting beside me, on a rock.

First Blind Man. I am sitting on dead leaves.

Third Blind Man. And the beautiful blind girl, where is she?

The Very Old Blind Woman. She is near them that pray.

Second Blind Man. Where is the mad woman, and her child?

The Young Blind Girl. He sleeps; do not awaken him!

First Blind Man. Oh! How far away you are from us! I thought you were opposite me!

Third Blind Man. We know—nearly—all we need to know. Let us chat a little, while we wait for the priest to come back.[1]

Many an inexperienced dramatist fails to see the force of these words of Maeterlinck: "An old man, seated in his arm-chair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him—submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny—motionless as he is does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or the husband who 'avenges his honor.'" If an audience can be made to feel and understand the strong but contained emotion of this motionless figure, he is rich dramatic material.

Action arousing emotion essential

In the extracts from *La Princesse Georges, Faustus, The Romancers, The Blind,* in the soliloquy of Hamlet referred to, and the illustration quoted from Maeterlinck, it is not physical outward expression but the vivid picture we get of a state of mind which stirs us. Surely all these cases prove that we must include mental as well as physical activity in any definition of the word *dramatic.* Provided a writer can convey to his audience the excited metal state of one or more of his characters, then this mental activity is thoroughly dramatic. That is, neither physical nor mental activity is in itself dramatic; all depends on whether it naturally arouses, or can be made by the author to arouse, emotion in an audience. Just as we had to add to physical action which arouses emotional response of itself, physical action which is made to arouse response because it develops the story or illustrates character, we must now add action which is not physical, but mental.

Quiescence may be dramatic

There is even another chance for confusion. A figure sitting motionless not because he is thinking hard but because blank in mind may be dramatic. Utter inaction, both physical and mental, of a figure represented on the stage does not mean that it is necessarily undramatic. If the dramatist can

[1] *The Blind.* Translated by Richard Hovey. Copyright, 1894 and 1896, by Stone & Kimball, Chicago.

make an audience feel the terrible tragedy of the contrast between what might have been and what is for this perfectly quiet unthinking figure, he rouses emotion in his hearers, and in so doing makes his material dramatic. Suppose, too, that the expressionless figure is an aged father or mother very dear to some one in the play who has strongly won the sympathy of the audience. The house takes fire. The flames draw nearer and nearer the unconscious figure. We are made to look at the situation through the eyes of the character—some child or relative—to whom the scene, were he present, would mean torture. Instantly the figure, because of the way in which it is represented, becomes dramatic. Here again, however, the emotion of the audience could hardly be aroused except through characterization of the figure as it was or might have been, or of the child or relative who has won our sympathy. Again, too, characterization so successful must depend a good deal on well-chosen words.

Three points

This somewhat elaborate analysis should have made three points clear. First, we may arouse emotion in an audience by mere physical action; by physical action which also develops the story, or illustrates character, or does both; by mental rather than physical action, if clearly and accurately conveyed to the audience; and even by inaction, if characterization and dialogue by means of other figures are of high order. Secondly, as the various illustrations have been examined, it must have become steadily more clear that while action is popularly held to be central in drama, emotion is really the essential. Because it is the easiest expression of emotion to understand, physical action, which without illuminating characterization and dialogue can express only a part of the world of emotion, has been too often accepted as expressing all the emotion the stage can present. Thirdly, it should be

Undramatic material

clear that a statement one meets too frequently in books on the drama, that certain stories or characters, above all certain well-known books, are essentially undramatic material is at least dubious. The belief arises from the fact that the story, character, or idea, as usually presented, seems to demand much analysis and description, and almost

to preclude illustrative action. In the past few years, however, the drama of mental states and the drama which has revealed emotional significance in seeming or real inaction, has been proving that "nothing human is foreign" to the drama. A dramatist may see in the so-called undramatic material emotional values. If so, he will develop a technique which will create in his public a satisfaction equal to that which the so-called undramatic story, character, or idea could give in story form. Of course he will treat it differently in many respects because he is writing not to be read but to be heard, and to affect the emotions, not of the individual, but of a large group taken as a group. He will prove that till careful analysis has shown in a given story, character, or idea, no possibility of arousing the same or dissimilar emotions in an audience, we cannot say that this or that is dramatic or undramatic, but only: "This material will require totally different presentation if it is to be dramatic on the stage, and only a person of acumen, experience with audiences, and inventive technique can present it effectively."

The misapprehension just analyzed rests not only on the misconception that action rather than emotion is the essential in drama, but also largely on a careless use of the word *dramatic*. In popular use this word means *material for drama,* or *creative of emotional response,* or *perfectly fitted for production under the conditions of the theatre.* If we examine a little, in the light of this chapter, the nature and purpose of a play, we shall see that *dramatic* should stand only for the first two definitions, and that *theatric* must be used for the third. Avoiding the vague definition *material for drama,* use *dramatic* only as *creative of emotional response* and the confusion will disappear.

A play exists to create emotional response in an audience. The response may be to the emotions of the people in the play or the emotions of the author as he watches these people. Where would satirical comedy be if, instead of sharing the amusement, disdain, contempt or moral anger of the dramatist caused by his figures, we responded exactly to their follies or evil moods? All ethical drama gets

Emotion the object

its force by creating in an audience the feelings toward the people in the play held by the author. Dumas fils, Ibsen, Brieux prove the truth of this statement. The writer of the satirical or the ethical play, obtruding his own personality as in the case of Ben Jonson, or with fine impersonality as in the case of Congreve or Molière, makes his feelings ours. It is an obvious corollary of this statement that the emotions aroused in an audience need not be the same as those felt by the people on the stage. They may be in the sharpest contrast. Any one experienced in drama knows that the most intensely comic effects often come from people acting very seriously. In *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (Act I, Scene 2), the morning reception of M. Jourdain affords an instance of this in his trying on of costumes, fencing, and lessons in dancing and language. Serious entirely for M. Jourdain they are as presented by Molière, exquisitely comic for us. In brief, the dramatic may rouse the same, allied, or even contrasting emotions in an onlooker.

Nor need the emotion roused in an audience by actor or author be exactly the same in amount. The actress who abandons herself to the emotions of the part she is playing soon exhausts her nervous vitality. It would be the same if audiences listening to the tragic were permitted to feel the scenes as keenly as the figures of the story. On the other hand, in some cases, if the comic figure on the stage felt his comicality as strongly as the audience which is speechless with laughter, he could not go on, and the scene would fail. Evidently, an audience may be made, as the dramatist wills, to feel more or less emotion than the characters of the play.

Definitions of dramatic

That it is duplication of emotion to the same, a less, or a greater extent or the creation of contrasting emotion which underlies all drama, from melodrama, riotous farce and even burlesque to high-comedy and tragedy, must be firmly grasped if a would-be dramatist is to steer his way clearly through the many existing and confusing definitions of *dramatic*. For instance, Brunetière said, "Drama is the representation of the will of man in contrast to the mysterious powers of natural forces which limit and

belittle us; it is one of us thrown living upon the stage, there to struggle against fatality, against social law, against one of his fellow mortals, against himself, if need be, against the emotions, the interests, the prejudices, the folly, the malevolence of those around him."[1] That is, by this definition, conflict is central in drama. But we know that in recent drama particularly, the moral drifter has many a time aroused our sympathy. Surely inertness, supineness, stupidity, and even torpor may be made to excite emotion in an audience. Conflict covers a large part of drama but not all of it.

Mr. William Archer, in his *Play-Making,* declares that "a crisis" is the central matter in drama, but one immediately wishes to know what constitutes a crisis, and we have defined without defining. When he says elsewhere that that is dramatic which "by representation of imaginary personages is capable of interesting an average audience assembled in a theatre,"[2] he almost hits the truth. If we rephrase this definition: "That is dramatic which by representation of imaginary personages interests, through its emotions, an average audience assembled in a theatre," we have a definition which will better stand testing.

Is all dramatic material, *theatric?* No, for *theatric* does not necessarily mean *sensational, melodramatic,* **The theatre** *artificial.* It should mean, and it will be so used in this book, *adapted for the purpose of the theatre.* Certainly all dramatic material, that is, material which arouses or may be made to arouse emotion, is not fitted for use in the theatre when first it comes to the hand of the dramatist. Undeniably, the famous revivalists, Moody, J. B. Gough, Billy Sunday, have worked from emotions to emotions; that is, they have been dramatic. Intentionally, feeling themselves justified by the ends obtained, they have, too, been *theatric* in the poor and popular sense of the word, namely, *exaggerated, melodramatic, sensational.* Yet *theatric* in the best sense of the word these highly emotional speakers, who have swept audiences out of all self-control, have not been. They worked as speakers, not

[1] *Etudes Critiques,* vol. vii, p. 207.

[2] *Play-Making,* p. 48. William Archer. Small, Maynard & Co., Boston.

as playwrights. Though they sometimes acted admirably, what they presented was in no sense a play. To accomplish in play form what they accomplished as speakers, that is, to make the material properly theatric, would have required an entire reworking. From all this it follows that even material so emotional in its nature as to be genuinely dramatic may need careful reworking if it is to succeed as a play, that is, if it is to become properly *theatric*. Drama, then, is presentation of an individual or group of individuals so as to move an audience to responsive emotion of the kind desired by the dramatist and to the amount required. This response must be gained under the conditions which a dramatist finds or develops in a theatre; that is, dramatic material must be made theatric in the right sense of the word before it can become drama.

The dramatic

To summarize: accurately conveyed emotion is the great fundamental in all good drama. It is conveyed by action, characterization, and dialogue. It must be conveyed in a space of time, usually not exceeding two hours and a half, and under the existing physical conditions of the stage, or with such changes as the dramatist may bring about in them. It must be conveyed, not directly through the author, but indirectly through the actors. In order that the dramatic may become theatric in the right sense of the word, the dramatic must be made to meet all these conditions successfully. These conditions affect action, characterization, and dialogue. A dramatist must study the ways in which the dramatic has been and may be made theatric: that is what technique means.

THE DRAMA OF IDEAS: IBSEN

By FRANK WADLEIGH CHANDLER

Of the modern drama of ideas the chief exponent is Henrik Ibsen. He writes primarily for the intellectual. He wishes to do more than stir the feelings or win esthetic approval. He is interested in certain truths by which he believes men and women should be guided in their conduct. Having conceived such a truth, he develops a plot and characters to render it explicit. And because he is an artist, as well as a thinker, Ibsen creates no mere mechanism of abstractions but a world of human beings whose feelings, thoughts, and deeds are of intrinsic interest. His personages are so natural, their circumstances are set forth so sympathetically, that we thrill before the spectacle of life, and only upon reflection perceive that we have been called upon to witness a laboratory experiment. Ibsen, the master chemist, has manipulated the elements of human nature to the end that their reactions may reinforce his preconceived idea.

Ibsen writes for the thinker

Now the business of every art is to rearrange experience, to impose upon it an order in accordance with the underlying truth of life. But some artists are prone to accentuate the facts of experience, whereas others are prone to accentuate the truths which the facts illustrate. Ibsen belongs in the latter category. He is a deductive rather than an inductive dramatist. Having conceived a truth, he then, and only then, invents a marquetry of selected facts, which will vitalize that truth in a drama. With Ibsen the idea transcends the story in importance, whereas with Shakespeare the story and the characters stand supreme.

The recent drift toward the drama of ideas, so largely determined by Ibsen, may be accounted for by the preoccupation of the time with matters scientific and humanitarian. Even in our es-

The search for the truth

From *Aspects of Modern Drama*, by Frank Wadleigh Chandler, 1918. The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

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thetic pleasures we cannot relinquish the quest for truth—a truth, too, crystallized into formulas. Through art we desire to be informed and directed. The modern dramatist is not content, like Molière, simply to present a type of character such as Harpagon or Tartuffe in order to expose the folly of avarice or hypocrisy. He is not content, like Terence, in "The Brothers," merely to suggest that the indulgent rearing of children may result more happily than a stricter control. The modern dramatist, when he chooses for the theme of his play some general idea, upholds and applies it far more rigorously than his forbears. Nor does he hesitate to specialize to an extent undreamt of hitherto. He deals with contemporary issues, with questions involving the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, workman and employer. He takes sides in debating the problems of divorce, disease, honor, the right of the artist to follow his instincts, the struggle of age to uphold its own against youth, the superiority of maternal to filial duty. Men like Brieux and Hervieu direct each piece that comes from their pens to the support of some special thesis.

Didactic drama

To the question, Should the drama teach or prove anything? those devoted to the drama of ideas answer, Yes. "If you inculcate an idea in your play," wrote Clyde Fitch, "so much the better for your play and for you and for your audience." In the same vein, Augustus Thomas has declared that the theatre is vital only when visualizing some idea in the public mind at the moment; and Professor Richard Burton, in discussing "Idea in Drama," has remarked that "A play without an opinion of life beneath it is a flabby invertebrate." He maintains that "the rational pleasure in any piece of work that gets a hearing in the playhouse is in ratio to the idea it contains, the criticism of life it offers, the oneness of purpose in steadily revealing it, and the skill with which it is made manifest."

Others, however, are as flatly opposed to the didactic drama. Like the Irish playwright, Synge, they insist that the drama is didactic only in its infancy and its decadence. "We should not go to a theatre as we go to a chemist's or a dram-shop," wrote Synge, "but as we go to a dinner, where the food we

need is taken with pleasure and excitement." So Norman Hapgood deplores the modern tendency toward emphasizing analytic thought at the expense of beautiful forms. He declares that it is not possible in art, as in philosophy and science, to separate success of thought from exhilaration and joy: "The only ideas of value in tragedy," he writes, "are the ideas whose light is beauty."

In the same spirit, Professor Thomas H. Dickinson draws up an indictment of our serious theatre. "Modern drama is concerned with ideas first and foremost. It has been created out of a world of thought, peopled by speculative mannikins, circumscribed in a technic prescribed by logic and directed to the understanding. It may safely be said that every great modern play can be stated first in terms of abstract ideas, and only secondarily in terms of personal living. In modern drama, life has been reduced to fromulas. Now every great drama from Æschylus to Synge has at its heart a modicum of ideas. It has been characteristic of modern drama to isolate and specify its ideas rather than to submerge and imply them."

Whatever be the attitude of the critic or the playwright toward the new drama of ideas, he will readily acknowledge that its ablest writer is Ibsen. For Ibsen has the genius and the skill to compose pieces which, however abstract in purpose, are richly individualized. His personages are almost never simple types. As Bernard Shaw has said, they do not furnish the actor with straight character parts. At the same time, Ibsen unquestionably offers a certain criticism of life, and a criticism more thoughtful, systematic, and influential than that set forth by any other modern dramatist. Positively, then, Ibsen excels as a writer of the drama of ideas; negatively, also, he excels by avoiding the excesses of mere intllectualism and abstraction into which some of his imitators have fallen. It is in Ibsen, therefore, that the modern drama of ideas may be studied to best advantage.

The theatre of Ibsen consists of twenty-eight plays, the last written about fifty years after the first, and the series extending through the second half of the nineteenth century. He

began as a romanticist, and his earliest themes he found in the past. His play, celebrating Catiline, as a noble Roman rebel, was followed by pieces dealing with the history of his own land, drawn from ballad and saga. Here, with a freedom of fancy and procedure quite foreign to his later productions, he breathed artistic life into heroic personages—Lady Inger of Ostraat, Sigurd, and Skule.

Ibsen's saga dramas

These saga dramas were followed by three great romantic works, which, like "Faust," are dramatic in form but epic in quality. "Brand" is the tragedy of a priest who, in a world of compromise, clings to an impossible ideal. His strength of will is admirable; it is only his ideal that is mistaken. "Peer Gynt" is the tragi-comedy of the opposite type of man, the adventurer, who determines to get on just by compromising. He must remain himself at all costs by adjusting his conduct to the exigencies of each moment; but, by this pliability of will, he violates his true self and becomes fit for nothing better than to be melted up in the ladle of the button-moulder, Death. "Emperor and Galilean" ("Kejser og Galilæer") is an epic of the conflict between Christianity and Paganism, and the tragedy, also, of a self-doubter. Here, although Julian the Apostate learns from a seer of a third spiritual empire that shall be neither all Pagan sense nor all Christian renunciation, yet, in his rebellion against the Christian renouncers, he endeavors to reinstate Paganism, and fails. He fails because it is impossible to make real again an outworn ideal, and because his persecutions only fan the flame of Christianity.

His romantic dramas

Two other works wholly different in style belong to Ibsen's long period of preparation. Both are realistic and satirical, and the scene in both is modern. "The Comedy of Love" (Kærlighedens Komedie") is a Shelleyan attack upon marriage. The legal sanctions of marriage, says Ibsen, tend to destroy love. The moment love becomes a conventionalized duty, it dies. So, Ibsen shows two lovers who, rather than imperil their affection by marriage, determine to part and to live only in its sweet memory. That his play

Satirical realism

was composed shortly after Ibsen's own marriage is perhaps significant. Ten years later, in "The League of Youth" ("De Unges Forbund"), Ibsen wrote a second satire upon modern society, here assailing political hypocrisy rather than the hypocrisy of marriage. Stensgård is a demagogue who swings from the radicals to the conservatives and from sweetheart to sweetheart, as he thinks it will advantage him. He and his friends and his foes are all compromisers; they prate of the public good, but think only of private gain; they are Peer Gynts of prosaic reality.

Dramas of individual revolt

Both "The Comedy of Love" and "The League of Youth" were experiments in a new type of play that Ibsen was soon to perfect. They are first studies for that drama of social revolt and individual awakening with which his name is most often associated. Upon the persistent cultivation of this drama he entered, with ripened powers, in 1877, when "The Pillars of Society" ("Samfundets Stötter") appeared. Ibsen was now in his fiftieth year. He had already composed more than half his total theatre, sixteen pieces,—saga plays, philosophic epics, and realistic satires. At last, he had found his true vocation in art, and henceforth he kept to it. Naturally, therefore, the dozen dramas ushered in by "The Pillars of Society" possess a certain solidarity. In aim, in subject-matter, and in technic, they are much alike. They are written in prose; their construction is compact; they are comparatively brief; and their characters are usually few. They deal with contemporary Norwegian life. They reflect the doings of families and of small communities. In one sense, they are provincial. Though they satirize politics occasionally, they are less political than domestic, and less domestic than individual. It is upon individuals in conflict with institutions that they focus attention. It is by the revelation of states of soul rather than by the unfolding of an outer spectacle that they compel our interest. With these later works especially in view, let us consider Ibsen in two aspects—as artist, and as thinker.

Ibsen is an artist of distinction, a master of dramatic technic.

Ibsen's dramatic technique

At first, a disciple of the French, he develops by degrees methods all his own. As Professor Brander Matthews has pointed out, it was Scribe who first perfected the machinery of the well-made play, and it was Dumas *fils* who, adopting that machinery, simplified it somewhat and furnished the grist for it to grind—certain ideas essential to the work and delivered to the audience in finished form by a *raisonneur*.

Now Ibsen takes over from Scribe and Dumas their machinery, but he makes it run more smoothly, thrusting most of the complications of plot into the unseen preworkings of the play. He observes Dumas's reliance upon ideas, yet such ideas he diffuses through his dramas, instead of leaving them as abstract sermons in the mouth of a *raisonneur*. Moreover, unlike Dumas, he builds up in his several plays a doctrine that is fairly consistent. Whereas Dumas presents in each piece an idea sufficient unto itself, Ibsen links play with play, exhibiting in each some phase of a central philosophy of life. And it is this philosophy that determines the ideas to be expressed.

Since Ibsen is concerned with ideas rather than with story, his art disdains the spectacular. It eschews the stagily artificial; it refuses to make use of convenient *coups de théâtre*. It takes little or no account of the romantic paraphernalia of disguises, concealments, stolen documents, overheard confidences, monologues, asides, flights of rhetoric. It is simplicity itself.

As Ibsen progressed, his stage contracted. A scene or two sufficed him. He preferred the action of a few hours. He returned to the classic unities of time and place, not out of respect for them as laws of theatrical art, but because instinctively he felt their value for his purpose. His subject is the inner life, not the outer; and the bustle and confusion of the older stage could but distract attention from the true centre of his interest, the soul of man. It is this soul at a crisis that he portrays. His scene is generally a room. Sometimes he shows a garden, once or twice a waterside or a mountain slope; but, except in the symbolic pieces, the action passes

indoors. And how little action there is! The turbulent speech-making scenes in "The Pillars of Society" and "An Enemy of the People" are exceptions. As a rule, little is done upon the stage. There are no murders or suicides there, and, save in "Borkman" and "When We Dead Awaken," there are no deaths. In "Ghosts," the curtain falls before young Alving's end; in "The Wild Duck," little Hedwig shoots herself off stage in a garret, as does Hedda Gabler behind a curtain. The fall to death of the Master Builder is not seen by the audience; the drowning of Little Eyolf is merely reported. This is the method of Greek and French tragedy.

With Ibsen, then, it is dialogue rather than action that counts, and his dialogue is notably simple. It is not poetical, rhetorical, or literary. It is talk, broken and fragmentary as in life. In the realistic plays it seems wholly natural, but in the symbolic plays it tantalizes because expressing the strange in terms of the usual.

Still more distinctive of Ibsen is his trick of beginning the play at what corresponds to the fifth act of the Shakespearean drama. In "Rosmersholm," for example, before the curtain rises, a whole tragedy has developed; but not until the third act does the audience understand that Rebecca West has practically murdered Beata, nor is it until the last act that her true motive is revealed. Almost nothing happens upon the boards; it is merely the gradual unfolding of a condition already existent that makes the play. This is the method of Sophocles in "Œdipus the King."

Realism

As an artist, Ibsen is both a realist and a symbolist. His modern dramas are realistic in settings, costumes, motives, dialogue, and in most of their characters. If the scene of the final act of "When We Dead Awaken," with its mountain heights and rolling avalanche be poetic, the settings of the earlier acts are sufficiently matter-of-fact. And it is the matter-of-fact scene and circumstance that marks the typical Ibsen play. The master of a shipyard is tempted to send to sea a rotten hulk carrying those he has wronged; a mother tries to conceal from a son the wickedness

of the father whose diseases he has inherited; a physician is assailed by society when he discovers typhoid germs in the waters of a bathing place; a good-for-nothing photographer threatens to desert his family on learning that his wife has had a past; a blasé adventuress, married to a kind little pedant, is amused to ruin his rival for academic honors; and an ex-convict, who has sacrificed love for the hope of wealth, cherishes a vain dream of being reinstated in society. These themes, baldly stated, are those of the realist.

And symbolism

Most of Ibsen's people, too, are folk who have stepped from out the cold little world of actuality known so well to the dramatist. It is only in the symbolic plays that a mystical Rat Wife or a personified aspiration, like Hilda, will figure; but even there such allegoric beings move among personages unmistakably actual. Thus, Ibsen has succeeded in painting from life a remarkable character gallery. Here are political opportunists, loose-living cynics, and the unhappy victims of hereditary disease. Here are swindlers, smug pastors, and self-deceivers young and old. Here are pathetic children, husbands wise, patronizing, or complacent, and women in rich variety,—the strong-minded whose lovers have married others for worldly advantage, the newly awakened, the emancipated without conscience, and comfortable creatures of the middle-class. From this gallery are excluded only the absolute hero and heroine of romance, and the absolute villain.

But Ibsen is not merely a realist; he is also a symbolist. His aim is not only or chiefly to hold the mirror up to nature. Rather, he reads meanings into life. He is a reflective, not simply a representative, poet. Deeper significances shine through the merely natural action of his later plays, and the pure idea not infrequently threatens to detach itself from the emotional picture.

Allegory

Allegory was the approved method of art in the Middle Ages. Although, to a degree, we have outgrown it, yet of late allegory has gained a certain vogue in its modern representative, symbolism. The symbolist tells a tale that may be taken literally, but in which

the elect may also perceive secondary meanings. To the elect the endeavor to detect these meanings is a very joy, but to the non-elect it presents a teasing task. Those born without a taste for symbolism or those who have never acquired it feel themselves cheated by the poet, who, in saying one thing, intends another. If, however, his primary, obvious, and exoteric story be worth while, then the non-elect are willing to accept his work for what they can understand of it, letting go the esoteric meanings. This is what many readers do with Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" or Spenser's "Faerie Queene." Now it is only when the secondary meanings begin to demand of the poet such sacrifices as to render his plain tale unintelligible or absurd that he may be said to offend the canons of art. To determine at what point the primary and the secondary meanings will diverge, so that the poet in attempting to ride two horses at once will fall between them, may be difficult; yet in a play like "The Master Builder" ("Bygmester Solness"), it would seem that this point had been reached.

"The Master Builder"

The first act and a half is understandable without resort to symbolism. Solness, an egoist, in order to maintain his position as a master builder, refuses to allow his apprentice, Ragner Brovik, to build a villa on his own account. Solness, moreover, in order to keep tighter hold upon Ragnar, has introduced the latter's sweetheart into his office as a clerk, and has deliberately fascinated her. She adores him, and, since Ragnar adores her, Ragnar will stay by the master builder and contribute to his fame. All this is perfectly natural. The weakness of Solness lies in the fact that, through fear of the younger generation, he seeks to resist inevitable change, and that, in doing this, he destroys his better nature. At such a juncture, Hilda, herself a representative of the younger generation, comes knocking at the door. Solness has not seen her since her childhood. Then, at the dedication of a lofty tower, he had half-jestingly kissed her and had promised to give her a kingdom at the end of ten years. Now she has come to demand the fulfillment of his promise.

From this point forward, symbols more and more obtrude, and the interpretation of the play becomes the solving of a Chinese puzzle, an exercise stimulating to the reason but one that leaves the heart quite cold. Hilda is installed in the Solness household. She retains her childlike enthusiasm for the master builder. She longs to hear again the harps in the air which once she had heard when he climbed to the top of the church tower in her native town and cried out to the Creator that in place of building churches he would henceforth build homes for happy human beings. She prevails upon him to give freedom to Ragnar and to Ragnar's sweetheart, and she urges him, despite his acknowledged giddiness, to climb to the summit of a lofty tower that he has reared upon his own new dwelling. When he falls from the highest pinnacle and is dashed to death below, she waves her scarf and, continuing to look upward, exclaims ecstatically, "But he mounted right to the top—and I heard harps in the air—*my, my* Master Builder!"

What is the meaning of this enigma? Is Hilda a woman, like Hedda, delighted to exert her power in determining the fate of another? Or is Hilda a mere imaginative child who cannot realize the stern actualities of the everyday world, with its storm and stress of competition, and who therefore unintentionally ruins the man she admires? Both interpretations are admissible on a naturalistic basis. Or, to recognize the symbolism, is Hilda the youthful aspiration of Solness returned to him in later life and leading him once more to climb as high as he can build? If so, his death is a triumph, not a tragedy. Or, again, is Hilda, as his embodied aspiration, a futile force compelling him to attempt the impossible? If so, the play is the tragedy of every man who lives long enough to find his ideals and his achievement superseded. One critic suggests that Ibsen is here symbolizing his own poetic career, and that the church towers Solness first constructed are Ibsen's own romantic dramas, that the homes for human beings are his social dramas, and that the houses with church towers upon them represent his symbolistic plays.

Another critic sees in the lugubrious wife of Solness, with her blind devotion to duty, and her lament for the dolls and the knick knacks burned with her home, a woman without soul, attached to the mere form of things, a clog upon the free spirit of the master builder. Still another regards her as the victim of her husband's egoism. Solness has wished her homestead to be burned that in place of it he might erect modern villas and so gain a start in life. As if his wish were potent to bring the thing to pass, the homestead has gone up in flames, and though his children have perished as an indirect result of the fire, Solness has won professional success. His wife, however, has been left the shadow of a woman, one who laments the loss of her nine dolls nine times more than the death of her children.

Whatever interpretation of Ibsen's cabalistic dialogue be adopted, the fact remains that it is easy to support an opposite interpretation. Moreover,—and this is a serious defect—the play, which begins with consistent human action that awakes emotion, presently loses semblance of reality and becomes a pretext for the hunting of concealed significances, an intellectual blindman's buff. What, upon natural grounds, is the status of Hilda in the Solness household, a stranger to Mrs. Solness, yet welcomed to dwell in one of the three vacant nurseries that are referred to so persistently? Why should jealous Mrs. Solness leave her husband alone with Hilda? Why should she confide in Hilda? Why should Hilda wish the man she loves to risk his neck by putting a wreath upon a tower? What sort of architecture is it that mixes ecclesiastic towers with domestic dwellings? and how can the climbing of a completed tower be related to the significance of its architecture?

Symbolism and reality

Mr. Archer maintains that Ibsen's symbolism is like that of Hawthorne: "Everything is explicable within the limits of nature; but supernatural agency is also vaguely suggested, and the reader's imagination is stimulated, without any absolute violence to his sense of reality." True as this may be of some of the plays, it is not true of "The Master Builder"; and, in "When We

Dead Awaken," there are things which similarly challenge belief. Symbolism less pronounced marks "The Lady From the Sea" ("Fruen fra havet"). Here the Stranger, an American, to whom Ellida Wangel has formerly plighted her troth by dropping a ring into the ocean, appears as almost an externalization of her longing for the sea, beside which she has passed her youth. In this play, however, Ellida's husband is a person so sensible, and the human message of the piece is so evident, that the secondary meanings never compromise those that are primary. Such is the case, also, with the allegory in "Little Eyolf" ("Lille Eyolf"). As for the symbolic notes that are sounded in some of the other dramas, they often enhance the effectiveness of Ibsen's work. Thus, the use of the opened door in "A Doll's House" as a sign of freedom, and references to the white horses in "Rosmersholm" as a token of death are devices common in all art. They are related to such verbal repetitions as Ibsen himself has employed to good purpose in "Little Eyolf," with its "gold and green forests," or in "Hedda Gabler," with the vine leaves in Lövborg's hair.

The peculiar flavor, then, of Ibsen's plays is in part the result of their unusual combination of realism with symbolism. Not infrequently, however, this combination proves unfortunate. The trouble seems to lie in the fact that symbolism is less suited for the acted drama than for any other form of art. The actualities of representation upon the stage tend to dissipate the mystic glamor that painting or narrative poetry might conserve.

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DRAMATIC NATURALISM

Ibsen

The naturalists of the stage are, in part, the children of Ibsen. They have followed him in fixing attention upon the commonplace and contemporary. They have found his dialogue, in its consummate art, apparently artless, and have sought to emulate this and his seemingly objective treatment of character. As a matter of fact, Ibsen's art is as highly selective as that of the idealists, and

his interests are as closely conjoined with the analysis of motive and the preaching of definite doctrine. In these points the naturalists have failed to follow his lead. They care little for the formulation of ideas; they are content to give to their audiences cross-sections of life, scenes in which the actors appear to be taken unawares.

With the influence of Ibsen, there has worked upon the naturalists, the influence, also, of Zola, high priest of the documentary novel and of the natural history of man. Zola, who defined art as a corner of nature seen through a temperament, demanded that it readjust itself to modern conditions. Like the brothers Goncourt, he urged the value for the artist of the contemporaneous. Like Diderot, he deplored the conventional representation of unrealities in fiction and on the stage. He proposed in literature to enfranchise the masses, the toilers, all those sufferers and sinners hitherto deemed unworthy of notice. By recoil from the dreamy idealizations of romance, he offered painful spectacles of wretchedness and crime, of brutal loves and bestial lives. These he by no means upheld as admirable. Rather, he sought, in portraying them, to bring men face to face with the truth. Those who would effect social reforms must first understand reality. They must see life steadily, whether or not they saw it whole, and, indeed, to see life whole was never the purpose of Zola and his followers. They preferred to focus attention upon its lower aspects, and to bring these to the light in all their hideousness. Zola himself yearned for naturalism in the theatre, but, aside from a volume devoted to the subject, and a play that failed—"Thérèse Raquin"—he confined himself to naturalism in the novel.

Zola

In Russia, Tolstoy, with his "Power of Darkness," approximated stage naturalism, although he was too much an idealist to surrender wholly to photography in art. Tolstoy showed the individual crushed by his environment, but with inherent possibilities of rising superior to it. Later Russians, like Gorky and Tchekhov, have rather emphasized the hopelessness of this conflict, setting forth the drab misery of life for the sentimental, passive soul caught in the net of circumstance.

In Sweden, Strindberg, the mad genius, whose plays have secured European currency through the German versions of Emil Schering, worked the naturalistic vein, especially in the direction of sensationalism. Strindberg, in particular, has described the competitive struggle between man and woman, and the operation of the associated instincts, love and hate. In Germany, the Freie Bühne society of Berlin, organized in 1889 in emulation of Antoine's Théâtre-Libre founded two years earlier in Paris, gave protection to Ibsen's "Ghosts" and to Hauptmann's first naturalistic plays.

The naturalist

Now naturalism itself is one aspect of literary realism. Realtistic art, to use the convenient distinction drawn by Professor W. A. Neilson, is that in which the sense of fact prevails over reason and imagination. The realistic artist observes actuality, and is engaged in the attempt to convey his impression of it, rather than to interpret it by the reason or to supplement it by the imagination. The naturalistic artist simply carries this process to extremes. He relies, even less than the ordinary realist, upon the appeal to imagination. He relies even more upon gratifying the sense of fact. He refuses, so far as he can, to allow his reason to reshape or interpret experience. He offers no theory of life; he professes, instead, to present life itself.

The naturalist, then, does not intensify actuality like the realist, nor does he transform it like the idealist; he endeavors to reproduce it. "Art," wrote Arno Holz, who drew up the program for naturalism, "has the tendency to become nature again." Art, indeed, is merely nature grown self-conscious. The artist, a part of nature, obeys his natural impulse for expressing himself and his experiences in the most natural manner. He cares nothing for form, except in so far as the subject suggests it, and he is concerned only with such subjects as are fresh and unconventional. In particular, he resorts to sensationalistic experience to find a substitute for the imaginative element dear to the romanticist. So the naturalist is prone to dwell upon crime, vice, squalor, the misery of the fourth estate, primitive instincts in primitive people, or else morbid passions in people of the higher class.

Strindberg would even distinguish naturalism from realism as an art concerned with the sensational. "The true, the great naturalism," he declares, "seeks out those points in life where the greatest conflicts occur. It loves to see what is not to be seen every day. . . . Let us have a theatre where we can be shocked by what is horrible, where we can laugh at what is laughable, where we can see life without shrinking back in terror if what has hitherto lain veiled behind theological or esthetic preconceptions be revealed to us."

Stage naturalism

Stage naturalism is thus reactionary in subject-matter and in technic. In technic, it minimizes the elements of plot, movement, climax, and the old romantic devices of asides, monologues, and impassioned harangues. It presents, instead, haphazard conversations,—a dialogue terse, broken, rambling, as that of life. It rejoices in dialect. It uses simple language and rude gesture to reveal hidden depths of thought and feeling; and to this extent it relies, like symbolism, upon suggestion rather than complete expression. For subject-matter, stage naturalism chooses background, atmosphere, and mood, in lieu of action; hence its fondness for "Kleinmalerei." It prefers the contemporary, that which has been freshly observed. It selects scenes from the realm of the proletariat, setting forth the life of the lower middle-class and of the underworld, partly for the sake of novelty, and partly in response to the social democratic movement of the times. It disdains nothing, however ugly, that can stir the feelings to an appreciation of human conditions as they exist. Specifically, naturalism recognizes the unnatural in our social structure and does not hesitate to emphasize it, to the end that dissatisfaction may incite to the building of a new structure more closely in accord with the laws of nature.

Naturalism in general

Naturalism, accordingly, lays especial stress on the influence of environment, on the hero who is passive rather than active, and on crime and disease as the result of social and pathological conditions. The naturalist draws his pictures, not that we may be diverted and

made to forget what is painful in human nature and unjust in human society. On the contrary, he practises his art that we may the better understand human nature even in depravity, that we may be forced to see and to know all the difficulties of a social problem still unsolved. Although the naturalist may be an optimist, or at least a meliorist, one with faith to believe that the race through struggle may yet achieve earthly salvation, the fact remains that many naturalists appear to be pessimists. Their insistence is upon the evil that exists, rather than upon the good for which they long. Philosophically, too, naturalism reacts against the old dualism which sets matter against spirit, and which recognizes the ultimate victory of spirit over matter. Naturalism is associated rather with the material monism of men like Haeckel of Jena. But, as art, it suffers from a grave defect. It tends to neglect the requirement that art shall keep within the bounds of the permanently pleasurable. Naturalism is too often painful. It stimulates for the moment, but it is too abnormal to prevail. Indeed, the fashion of naturalism no sooner arrived than it began to pass. Even those who commenced as naturalists lapsed back ere long to the mood of romance.

Three new conceptions have been assigned as explaining the rise of naturalism; first, the conception of society as made up of individuals engaged in a competitive struggle for the survival of the fittest; second, the conception of the biological equality of the sexes; and, third, the conception of heredity and environment as immensely influential. The first conception leads to a recognition of the fact that for most men the war of competition is bound to be tragic. Since this is the case, the naturalists say, let art frankly reflect that condition and no longer seek to make us forget it by drawing a world of dreams. The second conception of woman's equality with man in carrying on the purposes of nature lifts her, in the view of the naturalists, from her old position as a toy or a temptress to a plane of individual freedom. And the third conception, of the determining force of inheritance and environment, provides a new type of tragic fate, due to no envious god, due to no opposing will, but rather the result of

inborn circumstance. These conceptions, according to Professor Calvin Thomas, when reinforced by the spirit of socialism, result in the type of play early written by Hauptmann. Since life for the many is bound to be hard, we should strive to improve it, and for the artist to do this, there is only one way,—he must describe that life as it is.

Professor Chandler continues: ". . . The dominant themes of the naturalists are two: the influence of environment, and the influence of heredity. Both themes accentuate man as an animal, a creature material, a mere link in the chain of phenomena." He analyses naturalistic plays of Hauptmann, Gorki, Sudermann, Echegaray, Brieux, and others.

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DRAMATIC ROMANCE

Long ago, in a famous passage, Sir Francis Bacon defined the claims of poetical romance, or 'Fained Historie,' as he termed it. "The use of this Fained Historie," he wrote, in "The Advancement of Learning," "hath beene to give some shadowe of satisfaction to the minde of Man in those points wherein the Nature of things doth denie it." Bacon's theory maintained that the soul is superior to the world, that the soul desires a greatness, a goodness, and a variety not to be found in nature; that art alone can satisfy these yearnings. Of poetry Bacon wrote, "it doth raise and erect the Minde, by submitting the shewes of things to the desires of the Mind, whereas reason doth buckle and bowe the Mind unto the Nature of things."

Now the romanticist still finds his justification for art in Bacon's logic. Art is an escape from reality. Whereas the naturalist makes it but a duplication of Nature, exhibiting her every defect, the romanticist affords a relief from Nature to the free soul that would give to its dreams, at least for the moment, a local habitation and a name.

The mood of romance is perennial. So long as youth is in the world, so long as the memory of youth prevails, so long as the sentiment of wonder survives or can be reawakened, so long romance will flourish. In the history of literature, although matter-of-fact actuality from time to time becomes the favorite theme of those who write, yet romance

does not die. Even many who are themselves eminent realists have either once been romantic in their art or will revert to the romantic mood.

The varieties of romance are many. In the modern drama, however, a few classes of romantic play may be distinguished. One is the play of adventure, full of life and outward movement, motived usually by love, yet fairly external in action. Another is the play of pure sentiment, light and airy or grave, depicting the quest of the ideal, or extolling the potency of love. There is, also, the play which celebrates love in connection with medieval legend, the play of folk-lore, and the play of Biblical story. There is, further, the romantic tragedy, either of passion or of imagination. There is, finally, a large group of plays touched more or less with symbolism, pieces in which the literal story is not alone of importance. Thus, the world of dramatic romance is rich and various, and those who revolt at the sordid actualities upon which the naturalists dwell may find easy refuge in contemporary plays that support the claims of the ideal.

Typical romantic drama is classified by Professor Chandler as (1) the play of romantic adventure, such as Rostrand's "Cyrano de Bergerac"; (2) the play of sentiment, such as Rostand's "The Princess Far-Away" and Strindberg's "Swanwhite"; (3) the play based on legend, such as Hauptmann's "Griselda"; and (4) romantic tragedy of (a) passion as in D'Annunzio and (b) imagination as in Maeterlinck. He then adds a chapter on "The Drama of Symbolism," particularly as exemplified in Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Hauptmann.

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THE MEANS OF THE PHOTOPLAY

By HUGO MÜNSTERBERG

We have now reached the point at which we can knot together all our threads, the psychological and the esthetic ones. If we do so, we come to the true thesis of this whole book. Our esthetic discussion showed us that it is the aim of art to isolate a significant part of our experience in such a way that it is separate from our practical life and is in complete agreement within itself. Our esthetic satisfaction results from this inner agreement and harmony, but in order that we may feel such agreement of the parts we must enter with our own impulses into the will of every element, into the meaning of every line and color and form, every word and tone and note. Only if everything is full of such inner movement can we really enjoy the harmonious coöperation of the parts. The means of the various arts, we saw, are the forms and methods by which this aim is fulfilled. They must be different for every material. Moreover the same material may allow very different methods of isolation and elimination of the insignificant and reënforcement of that which contributes to the harmony. If we ask now what are the characteristic means by which the photoplay succeeds in overcoming reality, in isolating a significant dramatic story and in presenting it so that we enter into it and yet keep it away from our practical life and enjoy the harmony of the parts, we must remember all the results to which our psychological discussion in the first part of the book has led us.

The aims and the means of the arts

From *The Photoplay,* by Hugo Münsterberg, 1916. By special arrangement with the publishers, D. Appleton and Company.

Hugo Münsterberg (1863-1916) was from 1892 onward a professor of psychology at Harvard. He was interested in educational and social problems and in the psychology of art. His numerous publications were chiefly scientific.

What the photoplay does

We recognized there that the photoplay, incomparable in this respect with the drama, gave us a view of dramatic events which was completely shaped by the inner movements of the mind. To be sure, the events in the photoplay happen in the real space with its depth. But the spectator feels that they are not presented in the three dimensions of the outer world, that they are flat pictures which only the mind molds into plastic things. Again the events are seen in continuous movement; and yet the pictures break up the movement into a rapid succession of instantaneous impressions. We do not see the objective reality, but a product of our own mind which binds the pictures together. But much stronger differences came to light when we turned to the processes of attention, of memory, of imagination, of suggestion, of division of interest and of emotion. The attention turns to detailed points in the outer world and ignores everything else: the photoplay is doing exactly this when in the close-up a detail is enlarged and everything else disappears. Memory breaks into present events by bringing up pictures of the past: the photoplay is doing this by its frequent cut-backs, when pictures of events long past flit between those of the present. The imagination anticipates the future or overcomes reality by fancies and dreams; the photoplay is doing all this more richly than any chance imagination would succeed in doing. But chiefly, through our division of interest our mind is drawn hither and thither. We think of events which run parallel in different places. The photoplay can show in intertwined scenes everything which our mind embraces. Events in three or four or five regions of the world can be woven together into one complex action. Finally, we saw that every shade of feeling and emotion which fills the spectator's mind can mold the scenes in the photoplay until they appear the embodiment of our feelings. In every one of these aspects the photoplay succeeds in doing what the drama of the theater does not attempt.

If this is the outcome of esthetic analysis on the one side, of psychological research on the other, we need only combine

the results of both into a unified principle; *the photoplay tells us the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time, and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion.*

Photoplay versus stage play

We shall gain our orientation most directly if once more, under this point of view, we compare the photoplay with the performance on the theater stage. We shall not enter into a discussion of the character of the regular theater and its drama. We take this for granted. Everybody knows that highest art form which the Greeks created and which from Greece has spread over Asia, Europe, and America. In tragedy and in comedy from ancient times to Ibsen, Rostand, Hauptmann, and Shaw we recognize one common purpose and one common form for which no further commentary is needed. How does the photoplay differ from a theater performance? We insisted that every work of art must be somehow separated from our sphere of practical interests. The theater is no exception. The structure of the theater itself, the framelike form of the stage, the difference of light between stage and house, the stage setting and costuming, all inhibit in the audience the possibility of taking the action on the stage to be real life. Stage managers have sometimes tried the experiment of reducing those differences, for instance, keeping the audience also in a fully lighted hall, and they always had to discover how much the dramatic effect was reduced because the feeling of distance from reality was weakened. The photoplay and the theater in this respect are evidently alike. The screen, too, suggests from the very start the complete unreality of the events.

Isolation of art

But each further step leads us to remarkable differences between the stage play and the film play. In every respect the film play is further away from the physical reality than the drama and in every respect this greater distance from the physical world brings it nearer to the mental world. The stage shows us living men. It is not the real Romeo and not the real Juliet; and yet the actor and the actress have the

ringing voices of true people, breathe like them, have living colors like them, and fill physical space like them. What is left in the photoplay? The voice has been stilled: the photoplay is a dumb show. Yet we must not forget that this alone is a step away from reality which has often been taken in the midst of the dramatic world. Whoever knows the history of the theater is aware of the tremendous rôle which the pantomime has played in the development of mankind. From the old half-religious pantomimic and suggestive dances out of which the beginnings of the real drama grew to the fully religious pantomimes of medieval ages and, further on, to many silent mimic elements in modern performances, we find a continuity of conventions which make the pantomime almost the real background of all dramatic development. We know how popular the pantomimes were among the Greeks, and how they stood in the foreground in the imperial period of Rome. Old Rome cherished the mimic clowns, but still more the tragic pantomimics. "Their very nod speaks, their hands talk and their fingers have a voice." After the fall of the Roman empire the church used the pantomime for the portrayal of sacred history, and later centuries enjoyed very unsacred histories in the pantomimes of their ballets. Even complex artistic tragedies without words have triumphed on our present-day stage. "L'Enfant Prodigue" which came from Paris, "Sumurun" which came from Berlin, "Petroushka" which came from Petrograd, conquered the American stage; and surely the loss of speech, while it increased the remoteness from reality, by no means destroyed the continuous consciousness of the bodily existence of the actors.

Dumb show

Moreover the student of a modern pantomime cannot overlook a characteristic difference between the speechless performance on the stage and that of the actors of a photoplay. The expression of the inner states, the whole system of gestures, is decidedly different: and here we might say that the photoplay stands nearer to life than the pantomime. Of course, the photoplayer must somewhat exaggerate the natural expression. The

Photoplay near to life

whole rhythm and intensity of his gestures must be more marked than it would be with actors who accompany their movements by spoken words and who express the meaning of their thoughts and feelings by the content of what they say. Nevertheless the photoplayer uses the regular channels of mental discharge. He acts simply as a very emotional person might act. But the actor who plays in a pantomime cannot be satisfied with that. He is expected to add something which is entirely unnatural, namely a kind of artificial demonstration of his emotions. He must not only behave like an angry man, but he must behave like a man who is consciously interested in his anger and wants to demonstrate it to others. He exhibits his emotions for the spectators. He really acts theatrically for the benefit of the bystanders. If he did not try to do so, his means of conveying a rich story and a real conflict of human passions would be too meager. The photoplayer, with the rapid changes of scenes, has other possibilities of conveying his intentions. He must not yield to the temptation to play a pantomime on the screen, or he will seriously injure the artistic quality of the reel.

The really decisive distance from bodily reality, however, is created by the substitution of the actor's picture for the actor himself. Lights and shades replace the manifoldness of color effects and mere perspective must furnish the suggestion of depth. We traced it when we discussed the psychology of kinematoscopic perception. But we must not put the emphasis on the wrong point. The natural tendency might be to lay the chief stress on the fact that those people in the photoplay do not stand before us in flesh and blood. If we were to see the actors of the stage in a mirror, it would also be a reflected image which we perceive. We should not really have the actors themselves in our straight line of vision; and yet this image would appear to us equivalent to the actors themselves, because it would contain all the depth of the real stage. The film picture is such a reflected rendering of the actors. The process which leads from the living men to the screen is more complex than a mere reflection in a mirror, but in spite of

The flat picture

the complexity in the transmission we do, after all, see the real actor in the picture. The photograph is absolutely different from those pictures which a clever draughtsman has sketched. In the photoplay we see the actors themselves and the decisive factor which makes the impression different from seeing real men is not that we see the living persons through the medium of photographic reproduction but that this reproduction shows them in a flat form. The bodily space has been eliminated. We said once before that stereoscopic arrangements could reproduce somewhat this plastic form also. Yet this would seriously interfere with the character of the photoplay. We need there this overcoming of the depth, we want to have it as a picture only and yet as a picture which strongly suggests to us the actual depth of the real world. We want to keep the interest in the plastic world and want to be aware of the depth in which the persons move, but our direct object of perception must be without the depth. That idea of space which forces on us most strongly the idea of heaviness, solidity and substantiality must be replaced by the light flitting immateriality.

The photoplay is master of time

But the photoplay sacrifices not only the space values of the real theater; it disregards no less its order of time. The theater presents its plot in the time order of reality. It may interrupt the continuous flow of time without neglecting the conditions of the dramatic art. There may be twenty years between the third and the fourth act, inasmuch as the dramatic writer must select those elements spread over space and time which are significant for the development of his story. But he is bound by the fundamental principle of real time, that it can move only forward and not backward. Whatever the theater shows us now must come later in the story than that which it showed us in any previous moment. The strict classical demand for complete unity of time does not fit every drama, but a drama would give up its mission if it told us in the third act something which happened before the second act. Of course, there may be a play within a play, and the players on the stage which is set on the stage may play events of old

Roman history before the king of France. But this is an enclosure of the past in the present, which corresponds exactly to the actual order of events. The photoplay, on the other hand, does not and must not respect this temporal structure of the physical universe. At any point the photoplay interrupts the series and brings us back to the past. We studied this unique feature of the film art when we spoke of the psychology of memory and imagination. With the full freedom of our fancy, with the whole mobility of our association of ideas, pictures of the past flit through the scenes of the present. Time is left behind. Man becomes boy; today is interwoven with the day before yesterday. The freedom of the mind has triumphed over the unalterable law of the outer world.

Stage play borrowing from photoplay

It is interesting to watch how playwrights nowadays try to steal the thunder of the photoplay and experiment with time reversals on the legitimate stage. We are esthetically on the borderland when a grandfather tells his grandchild the story of his own youth as a warning, and instead of the spoken words the events of his early years come before our eyes. This is, after all, quite similar to a play within a play. A very different experiment is tried in "Under Cover." The third act, which plays on the second floor of the house, ends with an explosion. The fourth act, which plays downstairs, begins a quarter of an hour before the explosion. Here we have a real denial of a fundamental condition of the theater. Or if we stick to recent products of the American stage, we may think of "On Trial," a play which perhaps comes nearest to a dramatic usurpation of the rights of the photoplay. We see the court scene and as one witness after another begins to give his testimony the courtroom is replaced by the scenes of the actions about which the witness is to report. Another clever play, "Between the Lines," ends the first act with a postman bringing three letters from the three children of the house. The second, third, and fourth acts lead us to the three different homes from which the letters came and the action in the three places not only precedes the writing of

the letters, but goes on at the same time. The last act, finally, begins with the arrival of the letters which tell the ending of those events in the three homes. Such experiments are very suggestive but they are not any longer pure dramatic art. It is always possible to mix arts. An Italian painter produces very striking effects by putting pieces of glass and stone and rope into his paintings, but they are no longer pure paintings. The drama in which the later event comes before the earlier is an esthetic barbarism which is entertaining as a clever trick in a graceful superficial play, but intolerable in ambitious dramatic art. It is not only tolerable but perfectly natural in any photoplay. The pictorial reflection of the world is not bound by the rigid mechanism of time. Our mind is here and there, our mind turns to the present and then to the past: the photoplay can equal it in its freedom from the bondage of the material world.

Causality

But the theater is bound not only by space and time. Whatever it shows is controlled by the same laws of causality which govern nature. This involves a complete continuity of the physical events; no cause without following effect, no effect without preceding cause. This whole natural course is left behind in the play on the screen. The deviation from reality begins with that resolution of the continuous movement which we studied in our psychological discussions. We saw that the impression of movement results from an activity of the mind which binds the separate pictures together. What we actually see is a composite; it is like the movement of a fountain in which every jet is resolved into numberless drops. We feel the play of those drops in their sparkling haste as one continuous stream of water, and yet are conscious of the myriads of drops, each one separate from the others. This fountainlike spray of pictures has completely overcome the casual world.

In an entirely different form this triumph over causality appears in the interruption of the events by pictures which belong to another series. We find this whenever the scene suddenly changes. The processes are not carried to their natural consequences. A movement is started, but before the

cause brings its results another scene has taken its place. What this new scene brings may be an effect for which we saw no causes. But not only the processes are interrupted. The intertwining of the scenes which we have traced in detail is itself such a contrast to causality. It is as if different objects could fill the same space at the same time. It is as if the resistance of the material world had disappeared and the substances could penetrate one another. In the interlacing of our ideas we experience this superiority to all physical laws. The theater would not have even the technical means to give us such impressions, but if it had, it would destroy the basis on which the drama is built. We have only another case of the same type in those series of pictures which aim to force a suggestion on our mind. We have spoken of them. A certain effect is prepared by a chain of causes and yet when the causal result is to appear the film is cut off. We have the causes without the effect. The villain thrusts with his dagger—but a miracle has snatched away his victim.

Law for photoplay

While the moving pictures are lifted above the world of space and time and causality and are freed from its bounds, they are certainly not without law. We said before that the freedom with which the pictures replace one another is to a large degree comparable to the sparkling and streaming of the musical tones. The yielding to the play of the mental energies, to the attention and emotion, which is felt in the film pictures, is still more complete in the musical melodies and harmonies in which the tones themselves are merely the expressions of the ideas and feelings and will impulses of the mind. Their harmonies and disharmonies, their fusing and blending, is not controlled by any outer necessity, but by the inner agreement and disagreement of our free impulses. And yet in this world of musical freedom, everything is completely controlled by esthetic necessities. No sphere of practical life stands under such rigid rules as the realm of the composer. However bold the musical genius may be he cannot emancipate himself from the iron rule that his work must show complete unity in itself. All the separate prescriptions which the musical student has

to learn are ultimately only the consequences of this central demand which music, the freest of the arts, shares with all the others. In the case of the film, too, the freedom from the physical forms of space, time, and causality does not mean any liberation from this esthetic bondage either. On the contrary, just as music is surrounded by more technical rules than literature, the photoplay must be held together by the esthetic demands still more firmly than is the drama. The arts which are subordinated to the conditions of space, time, and causality find a certain firmness of structure in these material forms which contain an element of outer connectedness. But where these forms are given up and where the freedom of mental play replaces their outer necessity, everything would fall asunder if the esthetic unity were disregarded.

Esthetic unities

This unity is, first of all, the unity of action. The demand for it is the same which we know from the drama. The temptation to neglect it is nowhere greater than in the photoplay where outside matter can so easily be introduced or independent interests developed. It is certainly true for the photoplay, as for every work of art, that nothing has the right to existence in its midst which is not internally needed for the unfolding of the unified action. Wherever two plots are given to us, we receive less by far than if we had only one plot. We leave the sphere of valuable art entirely when a unified action is ruined by mixing it with declamation, and propaganda which is not organically interwoven with the action itself. It may be still fresh in memory what an esthetically intolerable helter-skelter performance was offered to the public in "The Battlecry of Peace." Nothing can be more injurious to the esthetic cultivation of the people than such performances which hold the attention of the spectators by ambitious detail and yet destroy their esthetic sensibility by a complete disregard of the fundamental principle of art, the demand for unity. But we recognized also that this unity involves complete isolation. We annihilate beauty when we link the artistic creation with practical interests and transform the spectator into a selfishly in-

Unity of action

terested bystander. The scenic background of the play is not presented in order that we decide whether we want to spend our next vacation there. The interior decoration of the rooms is not exhibited as a display for a department store. The men and women who carry out the action of the plot must not be people whom we may meet tomorrow on the street. All the threads of the play must be knotted together in the play itself and none should be connected with our outside interests. A good photoplay must be isolated and complete in itself like a beautiful melody. It is not an advertisement for the newest fashions.

Unity of characters

This unity of action involves unity of characters. It has too often been maintained by those who theorize on the photoplay that the development of character is the special task of the drama, while the photoplay, which lacks words, must be satisfied with types. Probably this is only a reflection of the crude state which most photoplays of today have not outgrown. Internally, there is no reason why the means of the photoplay should not allow a rather subtle depicting of complex character. But the chief demand is that the characters remain consistent, that the action be developed according to inner necessity and that the characters themselves be in harmony with the central idea of the plot. However, as soon as we insist on unity we have no right to think only of the action which gives the content of the play. We cannot make light of the form. As in music the melody and rhythms belong together, as in painting not every color combination suits every subject, and as in poetry not every stanza would agree with every idea, so the photoplay must bring action and pictorial expression into perfect harmony. But this demand repeats itself in every single picture. We take it for granted that the painter balances perfectly the forms in his painting, groups them so that an internal symmetry can be felt and that the lines and curves and colors blend into a unity. Every single picture of the sixteen thousand which are shown to us in one reel ought to be treated

Unity of forms

with this respect of the pictorial artist for the unity of the forms.

The photoplay shows us a significant conflict of human actions in moving pictures which, freed from the physical forms of space, time, and causality, are adjusted to the free play of our mental experiences and which reach complete isolation from the practical world through the perfect unity of plot and pictorial appearance.

THE SYMPHONY

By THOMAS WHITNEY SURETTE

I. WHAT IS A SYMPHONY?

In the first chapter I discussed the nature of music itself in order that I might clear away certain popular misconceptions about it and arrive at some estimate of what it really is. In the intervening chapters I have dealt with various phases of music: I have discussed it in connection with words or action, as a sociological force, and as a matter of pedagogy, and in so doing I have had to take into consideration all sorts of non-musical factors. Now the symphony is "pure music," so called; it exists as a separate and distinct thing whose only purpose is to be beautiful and true to life. Furtherfore it has always been largely independent of its audience. The opera has been subject to the vagaries of singers, to the demands of the audience for fine costumes and scenery; the symphony, on the contrary, has grown naturally and freely, being hindered only by the slow development of instruments and of the technique

The symphony as pure music

From *Music and Life,* by Thomas Whitney Surette, 1917. Reprinted by permission of and special arrangement with the publishers, Houghton, Mifflin Company. Mr. Surette has long been prominent as a lecturer and as a director and composer of music. Among his publications is *The Development of Symphonic Music.*

"The general principle underlying the shape of most instrumental works is this:—(a) Statement of idea; (b) Contrast; (c) Restatement. And on such lines are constructed all kinds of musical creations, from the tiniest pianoforte piece to the mightiest orchestral symphony. . . . This 'ternary,' or three-part form, in which the last section is based on the same ideas as the first, is, in a very great majority of cases, the principle of construction upon which a movement is built. It underlies the greater number of movements of all Sonatas, Symphonies, and Chamber works, and though its variations and details may be as diversified as are the blendings of orchestral instruments, the procedure is generally the same.

"Another form, more popular in the past than it is today, is the 'Rondo,' an extension of the above plan. It may be summarized as follows:—Statement; Period of Contrast; Restatement; Period of Contrast; Restatement. From the fact that the original idea comes 'round again' so many times, we get the derivation of the term. If the hearer can, in addition to these two basic types, follow the construction of a set of variations upon a given theme, he will be equipped for listening to most Sonata or Symphony movements.

"The 'Statement' portion is usually itself divided into two sets of themes,

of playing them. Nearly every great symphony has persisted in the face of the opposition of the public and of many of the critics; the gibes hurled at the First Symphony of Brahms were as bitter as those hurled at the Second Symphony of Beethoven. In discussing, therefore, what is undoubtedly the greatest of musical forms, I desire first to state as nearly as may be what, in its essence, it is.

A symphony is, of course, like other music in being an arrangement of rhythmic figures, of melodies (usually called "themes") and of harmonies. But before describing it as such—before dealing with its materials, its form, its history, and its place in the art of music—I wish to treat it solely as a thing of beauty expressed in terms of sound. Many people seem to think music an art dealing with objects or with ideas. Some, never having become sensitized to it in childhood, look upon it as of no importance whatever. A large number have tried to perform it on an instrument and have failed. Others have succeeded at the price of thinking of it only in terms of technique. A certain happy few, some of whom can perform it, and some of whom cannot, are satisfied to take it as it is and be stimulated by it. These are the true musicians and we should all aspire to join their happy company.

the first is the key of the movement, and the second in a nearly related key." One hears the 'Restatement' "when, after a period of unrest and rhythmic and melodic disturbance, the chief ideas, possibly much metamorphosed but all tending to gravitate now round the initial key of the movement, are once more placed before him. In most composers since Beethoven (and occasionally before him) an important summing up, or Coda as it is called, if often attached to this form.

"Works of large scope generally contain several movements, each of which may be constructed on the 'Ternary' or 'Rondo' plan, and each complete in itself. The older form of Sonata or Symphony contains three movements:—(a) A Quick Movement (Allegro); (b) A Slow Movement; (c) A Quick Movement (often a Rondo). . . .

"From very early days a fourth movement was soon added to this outline: at first (with Haydn) it was a Minuet and Trio, and was placed third in the scheme; with Beethoven, and almost all subsequent composers except occasionally Brahms, a quick vivacious movement called the "Scherzo" now finds regular place, and comes either between the first (allegro) and the slow movement, or between the slow movement and the Finale." On *Listening to Music,* by E. Markham Lee, (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London), pp. 36-39.—*Editor.*

What we call a symphony is merely a series of ordered sounds produced by means of instruments of various kinds. It is sound and nothing else. Our programme books tell us about "first themes" and "second themes," and we make what effort we can to patch together the various brilliant textures of symphonic music into a coherent pattern, but the music we seek lies behind these outward manifestations as, in a lesser sense, the significance of a great poem lies behind the actual words. So it is with all the greatest art, whatever the medium may be. The chief difference between a symphony and any other form of artistic expression—such as a novel, a play, a painting, or a piece of sculpture—is that a symphony is not a record of something else; it is not a picture of something else; it is itself only. And it is this quality or property of being itself that gives to all pure music its remarkable power. Any intelligent person, on being shown a diagram or plan of a symphonic movement, could be made to understand how and why the material was so disposed, for that disposition is dictated to the composer by the nature of sound and by the limitations and capacities of human beings, and it conforms to certain principles which operate everywhere; but that understanding would not reveal the symphony to him.

The appeal of music

There is in every one of us a region of sensibility in which mind and emotion are blended and from which the imagination acts, and it is to this sensibility that music appeals. Now, the imagination, which we believe to be the highest function of human beings, cannot act from the mind alone. Mathematics, for example, does not lie entirely in the domain of the mind, and the same thing may be said of any other department of science. The chief value of scientific studies in school and university lies in the stimulation of the student's imagination rather than in the acquisition of scientific facts. Now, we cannot conceive any act of the imagination whatever that does not glow with the radiance of emotion, so that music, in appealing to the whole being, is not so completely isolated as is generally supposed. But the simultaneous appeal of music to the mind and the feelings has led to much confusion on the

part of writers who have not been sensitive to all its qualities. In his essay on "Education" Herbert Spencer, for example, in discussing the union of science and poetry, says: "It is doubtless true that, as states of consciousness, cognition and emotion tend to exclude each other. And it is doubtless true also that an extreme activity of the feelings tends to deaden the reflective powers: in which sense, indeed, all orders of activity are antagonistic to each other." Now this statement reveals at once the limitations of a philosophic mind when dealing with something that requires apprehension by the feelings also. In listening to music the reflective powers are not engaged with objects or with definite ideas, but with pure sound that requires correlation only with itself, and the condition of mutual exclusion between thought and feeling no longer exists because the music is expressing thought and feeling *in the same terms.*[1] Spencer speaks of science as full of poetry, which is true enough, but his statement about music reveals an incapacity to understand it. And his misconceptions about art in general may be illustrated by the following concerning the axis in sculpture as applied to a standing figure: "But sculptors unfamiliar with the theory of equilibrium not uncommonly so represent this attitude that the line of direction falls midway between the feet. Ignorance of the laws of momentum leads to analogous errors; as witness the admired Discobolus, which, as it is posed, must inevitably fall toward the moment the quoit is delivered." This observation completely misses the quite sound reasons for the pose of that remarkable statue, and, if applied to sculpture in general, would destroy the famous "Victory of Samothrace" and many other fine examples of Greek sculpture.

Meaning in music

But it is strange and mysterious, after all, that these ordered sounds should be so precious to us; that we should preserve their printed symbols generation after generation and continually reproduce them as sound, feeling them to be strong and stable and true; that we should even come to say, after many generations, that their creator

[1] I stated in the first chapter what justification there is for using the word "intellectual" in regard to music, and I speak here of thought in that sense.

was a wise man who had in him a profound philosophy. But it is stranger still to realize how convincing this philosophy is as compared to any philosophy of the reason, and to see how profound in it is the sense of reconciliation—a reconciliation that the mind seeks in vain. Our life consists of thought, feeling, and action, phenomena of what we are, and in actual life never quite reconcilable. But the world of music is not actual life. Music is absolved from actual phenomena, and achieves by virtue of this freedom a complete and profound philosophy —a philosophy unintelligible to the mind alone, but intelligible to the complete being. The strength of every art lies chiefly in its detachment from reality. Sculpture does not gain by being realistic, picturesque, or decorative; on the contrary, it is at its highest when it is ideal, detached, and superhuman. Painting does not gain by being categorical, but is greatest when it seeks something beyond the outward, physical view. The novel or the essay depends for its greatness on its power of relating real persons, things, and ideas to that greater and deeper reality of which they are a part. In this sense music stands supreme above the other arts becaust it is the most detached. The elements of thought and feeling are, in music, presented as elements; the thought is not thought even in the abstract, for it is not "about" anything; the feeling is not actual feeling, and the action is not real action. Each of these properties or states of the human being is here expressed in its essence, detached from all actual manifestation. None but the highest type of mind, none but a heart full of deep human sympathy, none but a vigorous militant spirit could have conceived and brought forth such compositions, for example, as the Third and Ninth Symphonies of Beethoven, yet they are nothing but sound—neither the thought nor the feeling nor the action is real.

But we may also truly say that in Conrad's novel it is not the person, Lord Jim, who moves us, but rather the author's deep insight into the elements of human character expressed through the central figure. A portrait by Velasquez is a portrait of the personality that lived within the outward appearance. The figure of Pendennis is not so much the youth by

that name as it is youth itself—youth, care-free, but bound by tradition and love. All great art is subjective, lying in the mind of man.

It is from this point of view, then, that I approach the symphony. I do not need now to dwell on its history, on its form, or on its means of expression, because they are merely incidental to its being a profound human document. Pure music at its highest is the will of man made manifest, and one may doubt if that will becomes fully manifest in any other of his creations. It compasses all his actions, all his thoughts, all his feelings; it translates his dreams; it satisfies his insatiable curiosities; it justifies his pride (as he himself never does); it makes him the god he would be; it is like a crystal ball, in whose mystic depths the whole of life moves in a shadow fantasy.

II. HOW SHALL WE UNDERSTAND IT?

Musical associations and design

It is obvious, then, that the only possible way to understand a symphony is to accept it as it is and not try to make it into something else. Music is not a language; it does not exist in other terms, but is untranslatable. When a trumpet blares and you make any of the conventional associations with the trumpet, such as a battle, a hunt, a proclamation, a signal, off goes your mind on a stream of alien ideas that may carry you anywhere and that will certainly carry you farther and farther away from the music itself. Each of the orchestral instruments has its own individual association—the oboe reminds you of a shepherd's pipe, the flute of a bird's song, the French horn of hunting, and so forth; but each one of the instruments in the orchestra as you listen to it is forming lines, and adding colors, as it were, in a great design. And this design, always complete at any one point, goes on unceasingly forming itself ever and ever anew. It is always complete and always incomplete, always moving onward, always delicately poised for inevitable flight. As you listen you have lived a thousand lives; dream after dream has dissolved itself in your consciousness; each moment has been a perfect and complete existence in itself. When it is finished you awake to what you call happiness or

unhappiness, peace or struggle, satisfaction or chagrin; the unreal spectacle of the world imposes itself upon you again; you are once more a human being. Why ask that glorious world in which your nature has been freed and your soul has been disencumbered of your body to assume all the imperfections of this one? The gods, of necessity, dwell in the heavens. No, you cannot understand music by translating it into other terms, or by preserving your associations with the world in which you live. Mind and feeling, sublimated by the magic of these sounds, must detach themselves and rise to a world of pure imagination where there is no locality.

Reconciliation! A philosophy without a category; a religion without a dogma; an indestructible shadow world which offers no explanations, promulgates no opinions, and has no mission—which exists completely in itself. What more shall we ask for? Why cry to the heavens for a manifestation? Why take refuge in a so-called "system" of philosophy? Why shuffle off the whole problem on a dogma? What comfort to a squirrel in a cage to know the number of its bars? Is our slow and inevitable progress from the unknown to the unknown any more significant because we have learned to tell our beads, intellectual, religious, or æsthetic, to mumble our little formulæ, and to pick our way, eyes downward, amongst the stones and thorns, never once glancing clear-eyed upward to the sun? We have always sought a fourth dimension, and have always had it. We want what we have not; we wish to be what we are not; and all the time they have been within our grasp. We make a far-away heaven to answer this universal cry, when our hand is on its very doorlatch. Our imagination falters most when we apply it to things nearest us. Where *can* heaven be if not here? Is it an omnibus in which you may secure a comfortable seat by paying your fare? Or is it a state of yourself toward which you continually struggle and to which you occasionally attain?

This, then, is my thesis. A symphony is not merely an arrangement of rhythms, melodies, and harmonies; it is not a record of the thoughts, feelings, and deeds of men; it is not a picture of man or of nature. Rather does it launch itself

from these into the unknown. It is pure imagination freed from the actual.

Listening to the symphony

The foregoing does not, in any sense, preclude that idea of a symphony which is expressible in terms of rhythm, melody, and harmony. What I have said has been said for the purpose of preventing a conception of it *in these terms only* (and, of course, in still lower terms). Our physical hearing is a transit to the imagination and we want the physical hearing to serve that purpose. Nothing retards it more than an attempt *at the time* to intellectualize the process. In other words, listening to a symphony should consist in giving yourself freely to it; in making of yourself a passive medium. Your study of the arrangement of themes, and so forth, should precede or follow the actual experience. And if you have no leisure or opportunity for such study and depend entirely on an occasional concert, you should nevertheless continue to pursue the same inactivity, allowing the music itself to increase your susceptibility little by little. If the mind is employed in an attempt to extricate order from confusion, it usurps for the moment the other functions of listening. And I would go so far as to say that the proper goal of a musical education should be to arrive at such a state of impressionability to pure music as would leave the mind, the feelings, and the imagination free to act subconsciously without active direction, and without struggle. The matter is so obvious. There is the music; here is the person. It awaits him. It was created of him and for him. It is inconceivable without him. It is his spirit coming back to him purified. It is the only thing he cannot sully, and which cannot sully him, for in the very nature of it, it cannot be turned to base uses. What man would be, here he is. In making this beautiful spectacle of life, as Conrad says, he has found its only explanation. So we should avoid marring the actual experience by conscious intent on the technical details.

What I have said thus far may seem of but slight assistance to the average person who attends symphony concerts. I have stated what I thought symphonic music to be, and have

urged my readers not to listen to it analytically. But my purpose here is not to attempt to blaze an easy path for the music-lover; in fact, I am unqualifiedly opposed to that too common practice of æsthetic writing. There is no easy path, and an attempt to find one is disastrous to any progress whatever. Every person who has attained to a real understanding of æsthetic objects knows that the growth of that understanding has been slow. The characteristic weakness of our artistic status is self-deception. We are not frank with ourselves; we are unwilling to admit ourselves in ignorance; we advance opinions which are not our own. The only possible basis for advancement in anything is intellectual honesty. Information about a symphony is useless unless there is a real appeal in the music itself. So I do not attempt to provide here a panacea; just the opposite is my purpose. All I want to do is to show that the symphony is worth struggling for, and to brush away such misconceptions about it as might retard the progress of those who have the will and the perseverance to struggle. And when there is no will to struggle, nothing can be accomplished. What is called "mental lassitude" is almost a contradiction in terms.

It is obvious that a proper musical education would have solved our problems in a natural manner. If, as children, we had been taught to sing only beautiful songs; if we had been trained to listen to music; if our memory for musical phrases, rhythms, etc., had been cultivated, we should be quick in apprehending all the qualities of a symphony, for all our analytical reasoning would have been done beforehand. And nothing can ever take the place of such an education, because the natural taste for music, which is so strong in childhood, has in us been allowed to lapse. So that our first duty is to our children. We want them to avoid our mistakes. In every household, in every school, public or private, this ideal of music-study should be upheld—namely, that the children should enter life so prepared by their early training as to be able to enjoy the greatest music.

The symphony is self-sufficing

I take a form of pure music as a type of our highest attainment, because when music is allied to words or to action it gives certain hostages. Furthermore, the symphony evolved slowly under the law of its own being, and it represents the application to music of those general laws of proportion and balance of unity and variety, which govern all artistic expression. It has never been subjected to alien influences; popularity has not been its motive power; virtuosity has never dictated to it. If you understand the symphony you can apply that understanding to any other form of music. If one compares it with the opera this distinction is at once evident. In the opera that antagonism of which Spencer speaks between states of feeling and of cognition does exist, because the mind is there appealed to through objects rather than through pure sound. The symphony speaks in its own terms; opera speaks in terms of characters in action, of costume and of scenery, as well as of music. Even the greatest operas cause you to reflect on something outside themselves—on human motives as they find expression in human action. In either "Don Giovanni" or "Tristan," although the music reaches great heights of beauty and is profoundly moving, there is the inevitable struggle between seeing and hearing, the inevitable difficulty between a simultaneous state of cognition and of feeling. The symphony entirely escapes this dilemma. No doubt great motives lie beneath it; no doubt it, too, is a drama of human life, for otherwise it could not be great as a work of art; but the play of motives in a symphony is hidden behind the impenetrable veil of sound. The Third, Fifth, and Ninth Symphonies of Beethoven are truly dramatic, but only in this sense. They range from the tender to the terrible; they have their own emotional climaxes; they philosophize, they brood, they grin like a comic mask; action and reaction follow each other as in life itself; nothing is lacking but that one inconsequential thing, reality. Art is truth; life is but a shadow fading to nothingness as the sun sets.

III. THE MATERIALS OF THE SYMPHONY

I have said that the symphony evolved slowly under the laws of its own being, and I wish to state briefly and (as far as possible) in simple terms how that evolution came about. If I should go back to the very beginning I should have to point out that the primal difference between music and noise consists in the intensity of vibration and in the grouping of the sounds into regular series by means of accents. A series of unaccented tones does not make music. If a clock, in striking twelve, should, by accenting certain strokes, throw the whole number into regular groups, it would supply the basis for music. In any great piece of martial music these accents and these impulses in groups constitute the element that moves us to comply with it ourselves; we beat time with hand or foot; we are infused with the momentum. And the force of the impetus may be observed at the close of nearly every piece of music where conventional chords ease off its stress. The last forty measures of the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven constitute a sort of brake on the huge moving mass. Chopin's Polonaise, opus 26, number 1, on the contrary, does not end; it stops. In Fielding's "Tom Jones" the impetus of the action is carried on so far that the climax is postponed to a point dangerously near the end of the book, which leaves us with a sense of breathlessness or even of aggravation. In music, when this impetus is of extreme vigor, any temporary displacement of it produces almost the effect of a cataclysm—as in the first movement of Beethoven's Third Symphony, where great chords in twos clash across already established metrical groups of threes. Within the metrical groups all sorts of subdivisions may exist, and these constitute what is called "rhythm" in music. Rhythm, in brief, is the variety which any melody imposes on the regular beats that constitute its time basis.

The development of the symphony

Rhythm in music

It is from this rhythmic movement that the symphony gets its quality of action, and the precursors of the symphony in this respect were the old folk-songs and dance-tunes the melodies of which are full of rhythmic diversity. The line from

these early naïve compositions down to symphonic music was never broken, and there is hardly a symphony in existence that does not pay direct tribute to them.

I dwell on this point at some length because here lies a large part of the energy of music. The rhythmic figures to which I have already referred contain within themselves a primal force. They are capable of throwing off parts of themselves, and these, caught in the primary orbit, live as separate identities, until the too powerful attraction of the greater mass absorbs them again. As rhythm, then, a symphonic movement is like sublimated physical energy. As the first oscillations of its impulse strike our consciousness we are caught up into a world of movement which has the inevitability of star courses. We ourselves are all rhythm—rhythm imprisoned and awaiting release. In music we become one with all that ceaseless movement or vibration without which there would be no physical or spiritual world at all. I say, then, that rhythm is the very heart of music; that while we are all susceptible to it (though comparatively few people can move their hands or feet or bodies in perfect rhythm—they would be much better off if they could!) we do not altogether see what significance it has as an æsthetic property of music. When the heart of music stops beating (as in one of Beethoven's scherzi) we are surprised, or perhaps disturbed, not answering to the marvelous silence; when two or even three rhythms are acting simultaneously we are confused and helpless before the most fascinating of æsthetic phenomena.

Interwoven themes

Let me next dwell briefly on that element in the evolution of symphonic music which consists in the use of several themes simultaneously. Should we trace this back to its original we should find ourselves in the ninth century. Now, while I know that this is not the place for a dissertation on any abstruse musical terms, I shall venture this much, not only because this method of writing is used in nearly all really fine music, but because a large part of the pleasure to be derived from listening to a symphony depends on our capacity to follow the varied strands of melody that constitute it. Is it not so, also, with the novel? The chief

theme of Meredith's "The Egoist" has numberless counter-themes running through and around it. It is not by any means to be found in Sir Willoughby alone, for you understand it through Vernon's good sense, through Clara's dart-like intuitions, through Mr. Middleton's patient surprise at having such a daughter, through Letitia, and Crossjay, and Horace De Cray—all these are continually explaining and illuminating the theme for you. It is true that music asks you to listen to several melodies at once, but what does the episode of Crossjay's unwitting listening to Sir Willoughby's belated declaration to Letitia ask you to do? Is it enough merely to record the scene as it is unfolded to you? Or do you remember Crossjay's father stumping up the avenue in his ill-fitting clothes? Clara's intercessions for Crossjay? Vernon's attempts to adjust himself to Sir Willoughby's overbearing grandiloquence? And do you not have to remember, especially, that Crossjay had been locked out of his room by Sir Willoughby and had sought the ottoman as a refuge? These are all strands of the chief melody in that remarkable composition. (Not all the strands are there, for satire never tells the whole truth. "Tony" in Ethel Sidgwick's "Promise" and "Succession" is also an egoist.) A novel, then, in this sense, is not successive, but *simultaneous*. All that has been and all that is to be exist in every moment of life, for that is all what we call "the present" means. The chief difference between such play of character around an idea and the movement of many musical themes around a central one lies in the detached and spiritualized quality of sound.

Polyphonic music

It is obvious that music, written for an orchestra containing some twenty or more different *kinds* of instruments and scores of performers, must have great variety of expression. Each instrument has its own tone color, its own range, and its own technique, and each must be given its own thing to say. In this sense symphonic music is an intricate mesh of melodies, each intent on its own purpose, each a part of the whole. In no other of its varied means of expression is the symphony more strictly and more fully an evolution than in this one of complex melodic textures. There

has been no hiatus. From its first great moment of perfection in the time of Palestrina, through the madrigal and fugue, through dance-tunes conventionalized in the suite, through organ pieces, oratorios, and the like, this method of writing has persisted. Wagner bases his whole musical structure on the play and interplay of melodic lines in his *leit-motifs*. Bach is all melodic texture. Music written in this manner is called 'polyphonic," and the method of writing it is called "counterpoint."

Monodic music

In direct contrast to this is "monodic" music which employs only one melody against an accompaniment of chords. A large part of the music we hear is monodic; an aria by Puccini, a popular song, most church music—these have one melody only. So has Poe's "For Annie." Polyphonic music has the great advantage of being intensive in its expression; it evolves out of itself. When I say that almost the whole of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is evolved out of a few measures near the beginning, I mean that the melodic fragments of the theme take on a life of their own and by so doing illustrate and expound the significance of the original thesis from which they sprang. This quality, or property in music, upon which I have laid some stress, is, then, not so much a matter of technique as of æsthetics. The thing done and the manner of doing it is each the result of general laws, and I venture to dwell on them here, not for expert, technical reasons, but because I wish to offer the listener to symphonies one of his most delightful opportunities. Note should finally be made of the important fact that only those symphonic themes which have a varied and vibrant rhythm serve well the purpose of counterpoint, for the essence of instrumental counterpoint lies in setting against each other two or more melodic phrases in contrasting rhythms.

I do not mean to imply by the foregoing that symphonic music persistently employs counterpoint as against simple melody. There are whole passages in the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven where one tune is given out against an accompaniment of chords, and a lyric composer

like Schubert employs counterpoint somewhat rarely. But in the greatest symphonies the predominating method of expression is through polyphony.

In writing about counterpoint I have dwelt on the rhythmic quality in melody, and have stated that a well-defined and varied rhythm is essential to contrapuntal treatment. I might almost have said that all good melody depends on rhythm. I do say—expecting many a silent protest from certain of my readers—that all the greatest melodies have a finely adjusted rhythm, and I apply this statement to all melody from the folk-song to the present time. I might enumerate beautiful melodies whose effect depends on other properties than rhythm,—as the second melody in Chopin's Nocturne in G major, opus 37, number 2,—but I should add that, as melody, existing by itself, it is not fine and the reason is that its rhythm is monotonous.[1] And when I say it is not fine, I mean that it is not highly imaginative, and that it depends too much on its harmonization. And when, in turn, I say that, I mean, perforce, that it is too emotional. The difference between such a theme and one with a really fine rhythm is the difference between Poe's "The Raven" and Keat's "Ode to a Grecian Urn." In the former the mind is being continually lulled by the soft undulation of the rhythms and rhymes; in the latter the mind is being continually stimulated by their complexities. Yet Keats's ode is as unified as Poe's lyric. There are melodies for songs for the pianoforte, for the violin, and for the orchestra; there are sonata melodies and there are symphonic melodies just as there is a shape for a hatchet and a shape for a pair of scissors—which is only stating once again the old law that the style must suit the medium of expression, or that the shape must suit the uses to which a thing is put. Symphonic themes, in contradistinction to themes for songs or short pianoforte pieces, or dances, should be inconclusive; they are valuable for what they should indicate their own destiny. The

Again rhythm

Themes

[1] As examples of melodies with finely adjusted rhythms I may cite the theme of the slow movement of Beethoven's pianoforte sonata, opus 13, and that of the slow movement of Brahm's pianoforte quartette, opus 60.

four notes with which the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven begins are so,—in fact the whole theme is valueless by itself,—but they contain enough pent-up energy to vitalize not only the first movement, but the three which follow it. If it were possible for each reader of these words to hear—as an interlude to his reading—a series of great symphonic melodies, and if he would listen to them carefully, he would find almost every one to contain a finely adjusted rhythm.

Symphonic themes present certain difficulties to the listener whose understanding of melody is limited to a square-cut strophic tune. He is accustomed to a certain musical punctuation—a comma (so to speak) after the first and third lines of the music, a semicolon after the second, and a period at the end. And when he gets an extra period thrown in (as he does after the third line of the tune "America") he is all the happier. When he hears the opening theme of the "Eroica" Symphony break in two in the middle and fall apart, he gets discouraged, for his musical imagination has not been sufficiently developed to see that that very breaking apart presages the tragic turmoil of the whole movement. When Brahms gives out, in the opening measures of his Third Symphony, two themes at once, he does not fathom the element of strife which is involved, and so cannot follow its progress to the final triumph of one of them.

But the symphony contains everything, and there is a place in it for lyric melody, provided the flight be long and sweeping. The "slow movement" of a symphony contains such themes, but they are not content to be merely fine melodies. They, too, must contain some potentiality which is afterwards realized. The best and most familiar example will be found in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, where the first rhythmic unit (contained in the first three notes) of the beautiful romantic theme detaches itself and pursues an almost scandalous existence full of delicate pranks and grimaces, and comic quips and turns, now gentle, now ironic, now pretending to be sentimental, until it finally rejoins the theme again. This piece is a romance touched with comedy—a romance great enough to suffer all the by-play without the least dilution of its quality.

Any attempt in a book like this to explain the intricacies of harmonic development as it is seen in the symphony must be inconclusive. Harmony is, in itself, less tangible than either rhythm or melody, for it lacks to a considerable extent the element of continuity. I mean by this that groups of harmonies do not possess coherence in relation to each other. They do not stay in the memory as a line of melody does; the impression we get from them is fleeting. It may touch with light or shade one brief moment in a piece of music (as it frequently does in Schubert's compositions); it may produce a bewildering riot of color (as in ultra-modern music); or it may cover the whole piece with a subdued shadow (as in the slow movement of Franck's quintette). But the real office of harmony is to serve melody. I mean by this that when two or more melodies sound together they make harmony at every point of contact, and this harmony, incidental to the movement of melodic parts, has a reality which chords by themselves cannot acquire. And the whole justification for many of the sounds in ultra-modern music lies in this one perfectly correct theory. Not that the laws must not be obeyed—as they frequently are not; not that a composer may violate nature, and do what he likes. He must, as of old, justify in reason all the dissonances arising from his melodic adventures. He should remember Bach, whose melodies clash in never-to-be-forgotten stridence, striking forth such flashes of strange beauty as can only come from a war of themes.

Unity in diversity

The symphony is, then, an arrangement of rhythms, melodies, and harmonies. Each of these three elements has a life of its own,—the rhythms, taken altogether, have their own coherence, the melodies theirs, and the harmonies theirs,—but each belongs to the whole. The rhythm of Poe's "For Annie" would be an impossible rhythm with which to carry forward the purposes of any part of "The Ring and the Book." Equally useless would be the rhythms of Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony to carry forward the purposes of Beethoven's Ninth. The whole struc-

ture of Poe's poem would disintegrate if one single word fell out of place; so would the fabric of a Schubert melody were a note destroyed.

In every direction, wherever we look, this cohesion of all objects in themselves, this blending of all objects into a greater body, reveals itself. This is the basis of all religious belief, of a novel, of the composition of a picture, or of life itself. To say that a symphony is made up of separate elements, that each of these elements has a life of its own, and that they all unite in a common purpose, is to state a truism. And to suppose that a symphony can be understood without an understanding of all its elements is to suppose an absurdity.

IV. TONE COLOR AND DESIGN

Such has been the development of the elements of symphonic music. The processes I have described are the natural processes of an art which is continually striving for wider and deeper expression. And, speaking humanly, it is not too much to say that within ourselves there should take place a complete analogue to that development and to those processes. The connection between ourselves and the sounds may graduate all the way from complete unconsciousness of their significance (even though we hear all the sounds clearly) to that state wherein they strike fire in our souls, and there passes between the imagination of the composer and our own that spark of undying fire which illumines our whole being. For in the last analysis it is not so much the music that communicates itself as it is the soul of the composer reaching us over whatever stretch of time. He who creates beauty is immortal.

Is not this what we seek? Is not this the object of all beauty everywhere? Is it not always trying us to see if we are in tune?—as, indeed, everything else is: labor, love, objects, knowledge, religion—all these await our answer.

Instruments and tone

But I should not leave this part of my subject without setting forth the relation between these elements of symphonic music and the orchestral instruments by means of which they find expression. I do not wish to attempt here any account of orchestration, as such, but

rather to point out that in symphonic music it is by the quality of tone that the essence of an idea is conveyed. The tone of the instrument is like the inflection of the voice in speaking, wherein the truth is conveyed although you speak an untruth. An oath might be a prayer but for the inflection.

The pianoforte or the violin, or any other single instrument, has but little variety of tone; the orchestra, on the other hand, has not only four distinct groups of instruments, each group having its own tone quality, but within two of these groups[1] there are considerable differences in what is called "tone color." It is of no great importance to know that the solo near the beginning of the slow movement of the César Franck symphony is played on an English horn, but it is important to feel the quality of the tone, and to realize how largely the effect of the theme depends on it. For some obscure reason many people remain insensitive to qualities of tone color. (Perhaps they have received their musical education at the pianoforte which, under unskillful hands, differs only in loud and soft.) One so seldom observes a listener even amused by the antics of Beethoven's double-basses, and yet, in at least four of his symphonies, their behavior is at times extremely ludicrous. He whose humor ranges all the way from the most delicate, ironic smile to a terrible, tragic laughter, wherein joy and sorrow meet,—as meet they must when either presses far,—he achieves these remarkable effects largely by means of the tone quality of the instruments. In his Fifth Symphony he creates the most thrilling effect by means of some score or more of reiterated notes in the soft, muffled tones of the kettle-drum. In the finale to the First Symphony of Brahms it is the tone of the French horn, and again of the flute, that creates for us such profound illusions of beauty as pierce to our very soul. From the depths of the orchestra the horn chants its ennobled song; then follows the dulcet blow-pipe of the flute singing the same magic theme. These varied tones succeeding one another, or melting one into the other—these are the

[1]In the "wood-wind" group, so called, there are flutes, oboe, clarinets, bassoons, English horn, etc.; in the brass, there are trumpets, French horns, trombones, tubas, etc.

colors that animate and beautify the forms into which the thoughts fall. What delicate nonsense filigree the violins draw in the slow movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; how sepulchral the bassoon with its mock sadness; what a vibrant quality do the violoncellos and the contra bases give to the great melody in the finale to the Ninth; with what poignancy does the clarinet give voice to the sentiment of the second theme in the slow movement of Brahms's Third Symphony. How luxurious and vivid is the application of all these varied hues to the design.

A fine singing voice has, perhaps, the most beautiful of all tone colors, but the sensibility of many people seems to be limited to that alone. In fact the love of singing is, in many cases, merely a sentimental thrill unconnected with any intellectual process and entirely devoid of imagination. In the orchestra the tone of the instrument is to the theme itself what the color is to the rose. It is much more than that, of course, because it is at any time both retrospective and prospective; *this* tone color is a darker or lighter shade of *that,* or, perchance, another hue entirely. The colors shift from moment to moment always as a part of the design rather than as mere color.

Taking it all together—rhythm, meter, melody, harmony, and tone color—this substance of a symphony is a wonderful thing. Nothing quite so delicately organized has ever been created by the mind and the imagination of man. With an interplay of parts almost equal to that of a finely adjusted machine, it seems to go where it wills to go regardless of anything but a whim. How marvelously does it express both the actions and the dreams of human beings; how true is it to their deeper consciousness—a consciousness that dimly fathoms both life and death; that knows itself to be a part of the ages to come. It is just as likely that life is a brief, shadowed moment in an endless light, as that it is "a rapid, blinking stumble across a flick of sunshine."

[1]In his first essay, "What is Music?" Mr. Surette supplies needful definitions: "Melody in music consists in a sequence of single sounds curved to some line of beauty. Whereas rhythm is conceivable without any intellectual quality,—as a purely physical manifestation,—melody implies some sense of design, since it progresses from one point in time to another, and with-

out design would be merely a series of incoherent sounds. In this design rhythm plays a leading part, and the themes having the most perfect balance of rhythms are the most interesting. Examples of diverse but highly coordinated melodies may be found in the slow movement of Beethoven's pianoforte sonata, Opus 13, and in Brahms's pianoforte quartette, Opus 60, the synthetic quality of which is like that of a finely constructed sentence. Melody, being design, gives conscious evidence of the personality of its creator. Schubert, for example, is like Keats and represents a type of pure lyric utterance. Bach, on the contrary, is essentially a thinker, and his melodies are full of vigorous and diversified rhythms. . . . . Harmony is an adjunct to the other two elements. It is in music something of what color is in painting. As contrasted with the long line of melody and the regular impulses in time of rhythm, harmony deals in masses. Melody carries the mind from one point to another; harmony strikes simultaneously and produces an immediate sensation."

A few other elementary statements may be useful to some readers.

"In simple phrase Melody is a well-ordered series of tones heard successively; Harmony, a well-ordered series heard simultaneously; Rhythm, a symmetrical grouping of tonal time units vitalized by accent. The life-blood of music is Melody, and a complete conception of the term embodies within itself the essence of both its companions. A succession of tones without harmonic regulation is not a perfect element in music; neither is a succession of tones which have harmonic regulation but are void of rhythm. The beauty and expressiveness, especially the emotionality, of a musical composition depend upon the harmonies which either accompany the melody in the form of chords (a group of melodic intervals sounded simultaneously), or are latent in the melody itself (harmonic intervals sounded successively). Melody is Harmony analyzed; Harmony is Melody synthesized.

"The fundamental principle of Form is repetition of melodies, which are to music what ideas are to poetry. Melodies themselves are made by repetition of smaller fractions called motives (a term borrowed from the fine arts), phrases, and periods, which derive their individuality from their rhythmical or intervallic characteristics. Melodies are not all of the simple kind which the musically illiterate, or the musically ill-trained, recognize as 'tunes,' but they all have a symmetrical organization."—*How to Listen to Music,* H. E. Krehbiel, Scribner's, 1896, pp. 22-23.

"All music is made from 'phrases.' Music, like prose or verse, consists of a series of sentences, divided by its commas, colons, and full stops. In musical parlance the sentence is called a 'phrase'; the various kinds of stops are represented in sound by breaks in the musical flow, from the tiniest little halt between consecutive sounds to the long period of silence. Music is also punctuated by certain harmonic progressions, called 'cadences,' which bring to the mind the idea of more or less complete rest and 'finish.'

"Unlike prose, and more analogous to verse, is the grouping of phrases into regular periods that balance one another; just as certain lines of poetry not merely rhyme with others but contain the same number of feet and accents, so musical sentences or phrases balance one another."

"The phrase is almost always melodic, that is to say the pitch of its notes varies. . . . . The most simple form of music is that which is melodic, and in one part (i. e., one set of notes sounding at a time) only. Unaccompanied solo song is the most ready example of this, and the folk-song instantly leaps to the mind."—*On Listening to Music,* by E. Markham Lee, pp. 11-15 (E. P. Dutton Co.)

The 'sonata form' is composite or cyclical; that is, it is composed of two or more parts or movements. It includes the symphony, symphonic poem or tone poem (invented by Liszt, and frequent in 'program music'), concerto, sonata, and forms of chamber music such as trios and quartets for stringed instruments or for strings and piano. The overture, like the tone-poem, may appear to have but a single movement, but is also constructed on this pattern. Krehbiel explains that a composition of this general type is a sonata if written for a solo instrument like the piano, or for the violin with piano accompaniment. If the accompaniment be written for an orchestra, then the piece is called a concerto, while "a sonata written for an orchestra is a symphony."—*Editor.*

JAZZ: A MUSICAL DISCUSSION

By CARL ENGEL

Jazz, sarabande and waltz

To a great many minds, the word "jazz" implies frivolous or obscene deportment. Let me ask what the word "sarabande" suggests to you? I have no doubt that to most of you it will mean everything that is diametrically opposed to "jazzing." When you hear mention of a "sarabande," you think of Bach's, of Handel's slow and stately airs; you think of noble and dignified strains in *partitas,* sonatas, and operas of the eighteenth century. Yet the sarabande, when it was first danced in Spain, about 1588, was probably far more shocking to behold than is the most shocking jazz today. The sarabande seems to have been of Moorish origin. Then, as now, the oriental, the exotic touch, gave dancing an added fillip. When Lady Mary Mantagu, writing from Adrianople in 1717, described the dance that she saw in the seraglio of a rich Mussulman, she made allusions which leave no uncertainty as to the exact nature of these proceedings. Something of that character must have belonged to the earliest sarabandes. They were the proud Hidalgo's hoolah-hoolah.

A French author, Pierre de Lancre, wrote in 1613: "The courtesans who mingle with the players have given this dance such a vogue on the stage, that there is hardly a young girl in the country who cannot copy them to perfection." How truly the same might be said of our generation; it is the stage that starts a novel mode of dancing, the public which is alert to ape it and outstep it. Father Mariana, in his book *De Spectaculis,* published in 1609, devoted a whole chapter to an attack on the sarabande, accusing it of having done more harm than the bubonic plague which devastated Europe in the Middle Ages.

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Again, we hear it alleged that the moral corruption worked by jazz is vastly more calamitous than was the material havoc wrought by the World War. And yet, as we know, this once objectionable sarabande finally became a matrix wherein the greatest musical composers have cast some of their loftiest and purest inspirations. Dances, popular and no doubt shocking in their day, have furnished the soil for the cyclic growth from which has sprung, by way of the concerto and sonata, the grandest form of absolute music, the orchestral symphony.

What the waltz was when first it set Vienna spinning, when it turned Paris into one big whirlpool, has been variously chronicled by pious and blushing witnesses, none of whom was more perturbed than the impious poet, Lord Byron.

> Not soft Herodias, when, with winning tread,
> Her nimble feet danced off another's head;
> Not Cleopatra on her Galley's deck
> Displayed so much of leg or more of neck,
> Than thou, ambrosial Waltz.

Yet Weber was to vest such bareness in the spacious mantle of his art, and Chopin crown it with the coronet of quality.

I have taken the license of rapidly rehearsing these few historical facts, to answer those who might question my saneness in bestowing upon the musical side of jazz so much as a particle of studious thought. Without speculating what the future development of jazz may be, what ultimate contribution to musical styles it may make, there is an excuse for believing that long after the dance known as jazz will happily have vanished, investigators in the field of musical history will have occasion to search for the inception of these peculiar tunes, to seek for traces of contemporary opinion on their merit or their faults. I frankly think that it would set us down a rather jaundiced lot, if those investigators were to discover no sign of unbiased appraisement, nothing but wholesale ranting against a laxity of morals which was inveterate before the frenzied beaters of pots and kitchen kettles became entitled to full membership in the Musical Union.

Let me emphatically state that I in no way sympathize with these perpetrators of infernal din, who are giving a poor

imitation of the admirable savage, with his highly perfected and astonishingly diversified art of sounding pulsatile instruments.

Bad jazz and good

The savage stands far above the clownish tricks of rubbing sandpaper, blowing shrieky sirens, or hitting at random a battery of gongs. The savage is immeasurably more cultured than the person who belabors a piano with his whole body and, thrumming two or three ill-assorted chords, frantically fumbled together in endless and stale repetition, tries to tell you that he is playing jazz. As a matter of fact, he is doing nothing of the kind.

Like any other type of music, jazz can be bad or good. I am not defending bad jazz any more than I would defend a bad ballad or the bad playing of Beethoven. I have no intention of standing up for the insolent plagiarists who misappropriate and disfigure Rimsky-Korsakof, Puccini, and that superlative master, Johann Strauss. One of the most audacious in this little game is said to be a good musician, conductor of a practised band, the son of a respected Supervisor of Music in the Public Schools of Denver. (So says the *New York Times.*) I am certain that the apostle of vulgarization who should try to rewrite Shelley's poems in slang would be broken on the wheel and quartered. And I should be delighted to help set up the punitive machinery, if musical barbarians were to be similarly executed.

So much, then, to clear the stage, and range into a solid background these protests and restrictions, upon which I shall ask you to fix, from time to time, a reassuring glance, while I step to the proscenium and speak my little piece. The burden of it is this: there exists such a thing as *good* jazz music, and *good* jazz is a great deal better, and far more harmless, than is a bad ballad or the bad playing of Beethoven. And, if you are open-eyed in surveying our musical tendencies, you cannot pass blindly over the unspeakable riff-raff of our male and female balladists: the "Smile" songs; "Bubble" songs; "Mother," "Mither," and "Mammy" songs; the sloppy "Sweetheart" drivel; above all, the unpardonable maltreatment of the

classics by the multitude of amateurs—offenses infinitely worse than good jazz. And to the latter I now come.

Development of American jazz

Jazz, as a state of mind, is symptom, not malady. Jazz, in the guise of music, is both anodyne and stimulant to the afflicted. To the immune, it is an irritant. The term jazz, as applied to music, is rather elastic. It embraces not only the noisy-noisome sort, the jumble-jungle kind, but a type that refines upon and meliorates the racy stuff of wilder species with matter of a distinctly and engagingly musical nature. Good jazz is a composite, the happy union of seemingly incompatible elements. Good jazz is the latest phase of American popular music. It is the upshot of a transformation which started some twenty years ago, and culminated in something unique, unmatched in any other part of the world. Fifteen years ago we had progressed to the insipid "Waltz me around again, Willie," to the Coon-song and Rag-time factories in the back parlors of the West Twentieth streets of New York. With the period of "Everybody's doing it, doing it, doing it," about 1912, we reached the short insistent motive which was to usurp the prerogatives of songfulness.

Then, one fine day, in 1915,—or fine night, I should rather say; for, if I remember correctly, it was in the second act of a mildly entertaining operetta,—we were treated to "The Magic Melody." A young man, gifted with musical talent and unusual courage, had dared to introduce into his tune a modulation which was nothing extraordinary in itself, but which marked a change, a new régime in American popular music. It was just the thing that the popular composer in the making had been warned against by the wise ones as a thing too "high-brow" for the public to accept. They were foolish prophets. The public not only liked it: they went mad over it. And well they might; for it was a relief, a liberation.

Gradually, the courageous young man found imitators more daring than himself. Harmonic richness and variety entered victoriously where stereotyped cadences, barren and threadbare progressions, had reigned *ad nauseam*. Mind you, I am not setting milestones with the tunes I have named; I merely wish

to suggest to you different stages of a continuous evolution, by songs which were typical of each.

I have not given the subject sufficient study to say definitely at what point the course of popular American music took a new turn, but, unless I am very much mistaken, "The Magic Melody," by Mr. Jerome Kern, was the opening chorus of an epoch. It is not a composition of genius, but it is very ingenious. While it is almost more tuneless than was "Everybody's doing it,"—if that be possible,—and largely adheres to the short, insistent phrase, it stands on a much higher musical plane. Its principal claim to immortality is that it introduces a modulation which, at the time it was first heard by the masses, seized their ears with the power of magic. And the masses, for once, showed excellent judgment.

Mr. Kern subsequently proved to be one of the most fertile, tasteful, and characteristic composers of light music. When he tries to be purely melodic, he is apt to fall back upon cheap sentimentalism, tinged with spurious folk-song color. But his little harmonic device had a hue all its own; and popular parlance decided that it was "blue."

A veil of mystery covers the first dark deed that went by the name of "Blue." Forever hidden, perhaps, 'Blues' is the identity of the melancholic culprit who perpetrated it, although stout hearts are ready to cite the man, the place, and the tune. They are not apt, however, to tell you of an ancestral and *bona-fide* "blue chord," which Richard Wagner deliberately chose in order to make more graphic the word *blau* when Tristan, in the beginning of *Tristan and Isolde,* refers to the green, but distant, shore as shimmering still in a blue haze. That is the sublime instance.

The ridiculous one is the maudlin *glissando* on ukulele and steel guitar, the tear-duct of popular music. What stainless ears considered a rather weird turn of the melody, a morbid shifting of harmonies, entered the dictionary of professional jargon as "blue note," or "blue chord."

I am under the impression that these terms were contemporary with, if they did not precede and foreshadow, the period of our innumerable musical "Blues." What the uninitiated

tried to define by that homely appellation was, perhaps, an indistinct association of the minor mode and dyspeptic intonation with poor digestion; in reality, it is the advent in popular music of something which the textbooks call ambiguous chords, altered notes, extraneous modulation, and deceptive cadence.

The trick had irresistible charm; everybody tried it. It was in the preludes and interludes of the popular songs that the radicals began to break down the old order—that is, in those measures where the voice did not interfere with their freedom. The hackneyed "Till ready" was mercifully dispatched to limbo, and superseded by some dexterous harmonic tricks that not only stood, but demanded and deserved, rehearing. Instead of the traditional sequence of dominant diminished-seventh, and dominant-seventh harmonies—which formed the timeworn transition into the refrain and accompanied the chanted announcement: "When he to her did say,"—there sprang up a diversity of the freshest, most unexpected modulations, which fell upon the ear like drops of evening rain upon a parched and sun-baked soil. The various shades of blue, in which untutored harmonists indulged, ranged all the way from faint cerulean to deep indigo. The last could often be more fittingly compared to mud.

Elements composing jazz

Between the earlier "rag" and the "blues," there was this distinction: the rag had been mainly a thing of rhythm, of syncopation; the blues were syncopation relished with spicier harmonies. In addition to these two elements of music, rhythm and harmony, the people—who in the beginning had known but one thing: melody, fastened upon a primitive and weak harmonic structure of "barbershop" chords—the people, I say, who had stepwise advanced from melody and rhythm to harmony, lastly discovered counterpoint. And the result of this last discovery is jazz. In other words, jazz is rag-time, *plus* "Blues," *plus* orchestral polyphony; it is the combination, in the popular music current, of melody, rhythm, harmony, and counterpoint.

Each of these four ingredients bears racial features which are unequivocally American. Yet this Americanism is not exclusively a tribal one; it is not content to borrow from the

negro, to filch from the Indian. What marks of oriental inflections it shows hail from the Jordan rather than from the Congo River. While the primitive syncopation was taken over from the colored man; while the Semitic purveyors of Broadway "hits" made us an invaluable gift of their more luxurious harmonic sense, the contrapuntal complexity of jazz is something native, born out of the complex, strident present-day American life. Where did you hear, before jazz was invented, such multifarious stirring, heaving, wrestling of independent voices as there are in a jazz orchestra? The saxophone bleats a turgid song; the clarinets turn capers of their own; the violins come forward with an *obbligato;* a saucy flute darts up and down the scale, never missing the right note on the right chord; the trombone lumberingly slides off on a tangent; the drum and xylophone put rhythmic high lights into these kaleidoscopic shiftings; the cornet is suddenly heard above the turmoil, with good-natured brazenness. Chaos in order,—orchestral technic of master craftsmen,—music that is recklessly fantastic, joyously grotesque,—such is good jazz. A superb, incomparable creation, inescapable yet elusive; something it is almost impossible to put in score upon a page of paper.

Improvisation

For jazz finds its last and supreme glory in the skill for improvisation exhibited by the performers. The deliberately scored jazz tunes are generally clumsy, pedestrian. It is not for the plodding, routine orchestrator to foresee the unexpected, to plan the improbable.

Jazz is abandon, is whimsicality in music. A good jazz band should never play, and actually never does play, the same piece twice in the same manner. Each player must be a clever musician, an originator as well as an interpreter, a wheel that turns hither and thither on its own axis without disturbing the clockwork.

Strange to relate, this orchestral improvisation, which may seem to you virtually impossible or artistically undesirable, is not an invention of our age. To improvise counterpoint was a talent that the musicians in the orchestras of Peri and Monteverdi, three hundred years ago, were expected to pos-

sess, and did possess, to such a high degree that the skeleton scores of those operas which have come down to us give but an imperfect idea of how this music sounded when performed.

A semblance of this lost, and rediscovered, art is contained in the music of the Russian and Hungarian gypsies. Just as that music is a riotous improvisation, throbbing with a communicative beat, ever restless in mood, so is jazz. Just as the gypsy players are held together by an identical, inexplicable rhythmic spell, following the leader's fiddle in its harmonic meanderings, each instrument walking in a bypath of its own, so is the ideal jazz band constituted—that is, the jazz band made up of serious jazz artists.

Playing jazz

Franz Liszt could give a suggestion of gypsy music on the keyboard. He had a way of playing the piano orchestrally. There are few people who can play jazz on the piano. Jazz, as much as the gypsy dances, depends on the many and contrasting voices of a band, united in a single and spontaneous rhythmic, harmonic, and contrapuntal will.

The playing and writing down of jazz are two different things. When a jazz tune is written on paper, for a piano solo, it loses nine-tenths of its flavor. Only the bitter grounds are left. In that form, also, it is not unlike the clavecin music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of which only the melody was noted over a figured bass, or "ground."

Jazz, fortunately, can be preserved on phonographic records for our descendants. They will form their own estimate of our enormities. If we had such records of what Scarlatti, Couperin, and Rameau did with their figured bases, we should need fewer realizations, restitutions, and renditions by arranger and deranger. Of the people whom I have heard play jazz on the piano, I can name but two who have impressed me with their uncanny skill, with their infallible musicianship. One of them is a young man in Boston who will play you the ten piano sonatas of Scriabin by heart (!), one after the other, and, if you have survived that, will give you some transcendental jazz which, I wager, you will declare eminently more

worth-while than all the metaphysical ramblings of Scriabin's "third period."

My other young friend hails from New York; he is an accomplished player of Chopin and Debussy, yet nowhere quite so much at home as when he seems to grow another pair of hands, is over all the keys at once, and with the touch of wizardry, conjures up tonal jazz spooks that leave you baffled but grinning with delight.

Here is something in music that is a more typical, a more comprehensive expression of the *modern* American spirit, than all our coon songs, our pseudo-Indian wails, the regional songs of a hundred years ago, the tenth-rate imitations of vile English ballads, the imperfect echoes of French impressionism. Good jazz is enjoyed by capital musicians, by men who are neither inordinately immoral nor extravagantly uncultured. It has fascinated European composers like Stravinsky, Casella, Satie, as Debussy was fascinated before them by rag-time. "Golliwog's Cakewalk" and "Minstrels" are works of the purest art, notwithstanding the fact that the essence of their peculiar charm was filtered from the emanations of the music-hall.

* * * *

BRAHMSODY

By JAMES GIBBONS HUNEKER

Brahms and now

After Wagner the deluge? No, Johannes Brahms. Wagner, the high priest of the music-drama; a great scene-painter in tones. Brahms, a wrestler with the Dwellers on the Threshold of the Infinite; a musical philosopher, but ever a poet. "Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms," cried Von Bülow; but he forgot Schumann. The molten tide of passion and extravagance that swept over intellectual Europe threescore years ago bore on its foaming crest Robert Schumann. He was first cousin to the prince of romancists, Heinrich Heine; Heine, who dipped his pen in honey and gall and sneered and wept in the same couplet. In the tangled, rich underwood of Schumann the young Brahms wandered. There he heard the moon sing silvery, and the leaves rustle rhythms to the heart-beats of lovers. All German romance, fantasy, passion was in Schumann, the Schumann of the Papillons and the Carneval. Brahms walked as did Dante, with the Shades. Bach guided his footsteps; Beethoven bade him glance aloft at the stars. And Brahms had for his legacy polyphony, form, and masterful harmonies. In his music the formulist finds perfect things. Structurally he

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James Gibbons Huneker (1860-1921), once musical, dramatic, and art critic on the New York *Sun,* was all his life a student and lover of music. His *Chopin* appeared in 1900; *Iconoclasts,* A Book of Dramatists, in 1905; *Egoists,* A Book of Supermen, 1909; *Ivory Apes and Peacocks* in 1915. His continual and various criticism of the arts is that of an artist expressing his intuitions. "When a boy I was called a Johnny-look-in-the-air," he tells us, "because of my reckless habit of rambling into obstacles, from moving locomotives to immovable lamp-posts. I suppose I was dreaming. . . ." And once, to the horror of his mother across the street, he emerged upon the steeple of a church in his native Philadelphia. These things are in his mind when he opens his autobiography. "The avowals of a Steeplejack! . . . I, who write these words, am no poet, but I have been a steeplejack. I have climbed to the very top of many steeples the world over, and dreamed like the rest of my fellow beings the dreams that accompany the promenade of pure blood through young arteries, and now after a half century, I shall report these dreams and their awakenings. . . . To dream is to exist."

is as great as Beethoven, perhaps greater. His architectonic is superb. His melodic content is his own as he strides in stately pomp in the fugued Alexandrines of Bach. Brahms and Browning. Brahms and Freedom. Brahms and Now.

The romantic infant of 1832 died of intellectual anæmia, leaving the world as a legacy one of the most marvellous groupings of genius since Athens's sky carolled azure glances to Pericles. Then came the revolution of 1848, and later a race of sewermen sprang up from the mud. Flaubert, his face turned to the past, his feet to the future, gazed sorrowfully at Carthage and wrote an epic of the bourgeois. Zola and his gang delved into moral cesspools, and the world grew aweary of the malodor. Chopin and Schumann, faint, fading flowers of romanticism, were put in albums where their purple harmonies and subtle sayings are pressed into sweet twilight forgetfulness. Even Berlioz, whose orchestral ozone revivified the scores of Wagner and Liszt; even mad Hector, with the flaming locks, sounded garishly empty, brilliantly superficial. The New Man had arrived. A short, stocky youth played his sonata in C, his Opus I, for Liszt, and the Magyar of Weimar returned the compliment by singing in archangelic tones his own fantasy in B minor, which he fondly and futilely believed a sonata. Brahms fell asleep, and Liszt was enraged. But how symbolical of Brahms to fall asleep at the very onset of his career, fall asleep before Liszt's music. It is the new

But awakenings are too often wistful, if not bitter, and Huneker, in spite of his versatility, his charm, his solid achievements, and his zest in life, felt to the end that he was one of the many called but not of the few chosen. "The narration, on whose road I am starting out so gaily, may puzzle but it need not alarm you. It is the story of an unquiet soul who voyaged from city to city, country to country, in search of something, he knew not what. The golden grapes of desire were never plucked, the marvellous mirage of the Seven Arts never overtaken, the antique and beautiful porches of philosophy, the solemn temples of religion never penetrated. Life has been the Barmecide's feast to me—you remember the Arabian Nights—no sooner did I covet a rare dish than fate whisked it out of my reach. I love painting and sculpture. I may look but never own either pictures or marbles. I would fain be a pianist, a composer of music. I am neither. Nor a poet. Nor a novelist, actor, playwright. I have written of many things from architecture to zoology, without grasping their inner substance. I am Jack of the Seven Arts, master of none. A steeplejack of the arts." (*Steeplejack,* Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, "Apology.")

wearied of the old, the young fatigued by the garrulities of age. It is sad. It is wonderful. Brahms is of today. He is the scientist turned philosopher, the philosopher turned musician. If he were not a great composer he would be a great biologist, a great metaphysician. There are passages in his music in which I detect the philosopher in omphalic meditation.

His magic

Brahms dreams of pure white staircases that scale the Infinite. A dazzling, dry light floods his mind, and you hear the rustling of wings—wings of great, terrifying monsters; hippogrifs of horrid mien; hieroglyphic faces, faces with stony stare, menace your imagination. He can bring down within the compass of the octave moods that are outside the pale of mortals. He is a magician, spectral at times, yet his songs have the homely lyric fervour and concision of Robert Burns. A groper after the untoward, shudders at certain bars in his F sharp minor sonata and weeps with the moonlit tranquillity in the slow movement of the F minor sonata. He is often dull, muddy-pated, obscure, and maddeningly slow. Then a rift of lovely music wells out of the mist; you are enchanted and cry: "Brahms, master, anoint again with thy precious melodic chrism our thirsty eyelids!"

His thought

Brahms is an inexorable formulist. His four symphonies, his three piano sonatas, the choral works and chamber music—are they not all living testimony to his admirable management of masses? He is not a great colourist. For him the pigments of Makart, Wagner, and Théophile Gautier are as naught. Like Puvis de Chavannes, he is a Primitive. Simple, flat tints, primary and cool, are superimposed upon rhythmic versatility and strenuousness of thought. Ideas, noble, profundity-embracing ideas he has. He says great things in a great manner, but it is not the smart, epigrammatic, scarlet, flashing style of your little man. He disdains racial allusions. He is German, but a planetary Teuton. You seek in vain for the geographical hints, hintings that chain Grieg to the map of Norway. Brahms's melodies are world-typical, not cabined and confined to his native Hamburg. This largeness of utterance, lack of polish, and a disregard for the politesse of his art do not endear him to the

unthinking. Yet, what a master miniaturist he is in his little piano pieces, his Intermezzi. There he catches the tender sigh of childhood or the intimate flutterings of the heart stirred by desire. Feminine he is as no woman composer; and virile as are few men. The sinister fury, the mocking, drastic fury of his first rhapsodies—true soul-tragedies—how they unearthed the core of pessimism in our age. Pessimist? Yes, but yet believer; a believer in himself, thus a believer in men and women.

He reminds me more of Browning than does Schumann. The full-pulsed humanity, the dramatic—yes, Brahms is dramatic, not theatric—modes of analysis, the flow, glow, and relentless tracking to their ultimate lair of motives is Browning; but the composer never loses his grip on the actualities of structure. After Chopin, Brahms? He gives us a cooling, deep draught in exchange for the sugared worm-wood, the sweet, exasperated poison of the Polish charmer. A great sea is his music, and it sings about the base of that mighty mount we call Beethoven. Brahms takes us to subterrane depths; Beethoven is for the heights. Strong lungs are needed for the company of both giants.

Brahms, the surgeon whose scalped pierces the aches of modern soul-maladies. Bard and healer. Beethoven and Brahms.

LOOKING INTO PICTURES

By THE EDITOR

1

The uninstructed are likely to admire pictures for qualities and features not of prime concern to painters. In the art galleries the so-called emotion of recognition, which helps our literate age to read itself into novels, appears to be what visitors most enjoy. Paintings that represent in the traditional manner pleasing natural objects, particularly human beings, first catch the eye, while those that render the familiar human with a touch or a drenching of sentimentality draw the crowd. A girl by Greuze, a peasant mother by Israels, Rosa Bonheur's animals, Meissonier's charging men, the swimmers of Sorolla, the unmasked ladies of Sargent—all these recall the wonted world, yet deepen its paling romance or dignify it with perspective. As for landscape in painting, it seems to leave most people indifferent, as in its aesthetic aspects actual landscape leaves them unmoved in daily life. Human interest, whether romantically or realistically attained, is the instinctive general demand.

In the art galleries

Pictorial subject

This naive concentration upon those recognizable concrete forms which taken together he calls the subject of his picture moves the painter to a more or less good-natured contempt. A blindness in people to such things as lighting, atmosphere, composition, he allows for, but their specific praise or blame is a different matter. "What awkward hands—and they're green!" ventures someone, "But that lily is splendid—I could almost pick it from the canvas." "Did you ever freshly and clearly see anything?" the painter would like then to retort. "And in any case, my subject is of quite secondary importance to me, while as for faithful representation, actual imitation of nature, that is not the business of an artist." "But what, then, will you represent?" "I'll represent nothing—I'll paint what no one can see except with the eyes of the imagination!" From which it appears

that we need to enter the studio with the fewest possible preconceptions, while the painter in turn should explain his purposes.

It is obvious that as a pictorial subject neither Sleeping Beauty nor Mont Blanc nor the Holy Grail can lift a mean or bungling painter to artistic heights. On the other hand, the galleries prove that a Vollon, a Rembrandt, a Velasquez will be his great self with a subject called Pumpkins, Anatomy Lesson, or Court Dwarf. The hand prompted by imagination and skilled in line, color, and atmosphere can impart splendor and vitality to any substance. Yet both artist and layman may profit by the flat reminder that pictorial subject in the full sense consists not of the natural objects minutely or broadly imitated but of the something wrought out of nature at every stroke by the painter. Subject, in other words, is not something picked up and then drawn and painted: it comes into being only in the process of painting and it is expressive paint. A successful picture is organic, its subject a vital factor conditioning and in turn conditioned by the other factors and the artist himself.[1]

Pictorial purpose and method

However one may state such things, there continues in this twentieth century among artists and critics a perplexing and even embittered contention as to the proper subject matter, purposes, and methods of painting. Shall painters offer us "a bauble-world to ape yon real," their work to be valued in proportion as it is faithful to experienced actuality? Or shall they

[1] "The only beautiful things, as somebody once said, are the things that do not concern us. As long as a thing is useful or necessary to us, or affects us in any way, either for pain or for pleasure, or appeals strongly to our sympathies, or is a vital part of the environment in which we live, it is outside the proper sphere of art. To art's subject-matter we should be more or less indifferent. We should, at any rate, have no preferences, no prejudices, no partisan feeling of any kind."—Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying."

Wilde's essay is of course purposely paradoxical and partially ironic. Art cannot draw its material from anything but nature, in the inclusive sense. But it must not be for the sake of its practical relations to us that the artist depicts any object, natural in the narrow sense, or human. And the more any object in nature or in art has of personal relationship to us, the more will its aesthetic effect be interfered with.

attempt imaginative interpretations of human life, of quiet hills and unquiet sea? Or try to reveal some hidden perfection, some archetypal pattern—a god's design within the welter of fair and foul particulars? Through forms of nature cunningly remoulded shall they rather express their own moods and personalities? Or refusing to deal with organized and natural forms at all, borrowing from materiality only tools and a shining medium, ought they to be content with nothing less than actual creation, the production of abstract form such as only music has hitherto achieved?

While such undertakings are not mutually exclusive, some thought of them is necessary if we are to appreciate the various kinds of paintings. Colors can be laid upon canvas for either of two principal ends: reproduction of things previously existent; production of newly conceived forms. In the first case, painting follows more or less accurately the forms of natural or of man-made objects; it is called representation or illustration. In the second, the painter so selects and remoulds the material, so organizes line and color in space as to create new patterns that have a charm independent of any likeness to recognizable things; he attains presentation or decoration. Now just as the particular tones wrought into a piece of music had no being until the composer heard them with inward ear and struck them upon his instrument, so the particular filaments and masses of color making up a painting spring into existence with that painting, and are themselves original and presentative. But the rhythm that melodizes or orchestrates the pictorial elements may either be taken over with the observed models and groupings, being thus representative, or be newly conceived and imposed upon the chosen materials, the work becoming in so far presentative, creative. Any successful painting, moreover, while it may illustrate familiar objects and incidents, does with its original modifications and arrangements of presentative elements appeal directly to sense and through it to our own creative imagination. Such combination of representative and presentative qualities, such appeal both human and aesthetic, may be found in pictures as unlike as Giorgione's "Venetian Pas-

toral," Hokusai's "Wave," the "Fighting Téméraire" of Turner, and the "Hay Wain" of Constable. A good painting can even be turned sidewise or upside down and be perhaps more fully sensed as exquisite patterns of light and dark, of balanced masses and toned colors, or as wondrous spaces inviting plunge or swallow-flight.[1] It has the enduring decorative qualities of purely aesthetic value.

Classification of pictures

Regarding the classification of pictures we may properly be more specific. On the basis of subject there are the following more or less distinct kinds: 1) the broadly historic or narrative, representing scenes from general human life, whether profane or religious, and including pictorial myth and allegory; 2) portraiture of both human beings and animals, where the interest is not in action or situation but in the appearance, the character, or the supposed significance of an individual being; 3) *genre,* depicting scenes from the common life of home, field, shop, or street; 4) landscape and waterscape; 5) still life. All the subjects implied may be treated with emphasis upon illustration, to the extreme familiar on magazine covers, or with emphasis upon decoration, to the extreme of wall painting in a public building or of synthetic landscape. The declared portrait, however, will naturally keep close to the visual fact; while landscape, because it does not hold in our minds a fixed and typical form, flows often into some expression of the painter's mood or suffers reconstruction to reveal more fully what the Japanese call *kokoro,* the spiritual essence of things. Once more, the painter who, whether by realistic or by symbolic treatment, endeavors to transmit physical actuality, story, connected ideas, must fall short of artistic success, because these find their natural vehicle only in literature and drama. Artists and public both would do well to ponder the malicious *mot* quoted by Whistler of a painting that aimed at something other than form and movement through color: *"C'est bien écrit!"* The better the writ-

[1]Compare *Ukiyo-ye,* "pictures of the changing world," so well known in Japanese color-prints.

ing, the worse the painting. But finally, to refuse to deal at all with material existence and human life because of their non-aesthetic associations, and attempt instead to compose color music upon canvas, as do some Futurists and Synchromists, again courts failure. Some connection with materiality and with humanity is entailed by the limitations of the medium pigment and by human instincts.

2

Historically, all aims have emerged and all methods been tried. There has been abundant realistic representation, as in the Van Eycks, Hogarth, the Dutch and moderns generally. Reality has been idealized intellectually or emotionally, as by Raphael, Claude, Ingres, and Watts. It has been variously interpreted, as by Angelico, Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Böcklin, Inness and Ryder, and perhaps best of all by the Chinese masters of the Sung and Ming dynasties. It has been sentimentalized by Landseer, Greuze, Bouguereau and countless others. Actuality and impression are strangely combined in works by artists as different as Goya, Degas, Nevinson, and Bellows. The painter's individuality is everywhere betrayed: Michelangelo and Velasquez, Whistler and Gauguin, Matisse and Brangwyn, are incessantly busy with self-portraiture. Only the Cubists as they split up space, the Futurists as they try to pattern moments and their partial visions into time and totality, the Expressionists building symbolic spider-webs to snare reality, and the Synchromists blowing cosmic bubbles remain personally in eclipse. But these are question-begging phrases: full appreciation and fair judgment result only from sympathetic study. Yet even a birdseye view of the development of painting, with occasional questioning of individual masters, will help us toward some defensible opinions and secure that increased enjoyment that comes from looking not merely at pictures, but into them.

Cave drawings

The historian of painting need draw but little upon imagination in seeking the beginnings of his art. When glacial man had achieved no other tools than roughly shaped stone and bone, he was keenly observant

of the living forms about him, and the illustrative rock-drawings of ten or twenty thousand years ago attest his amazing skill of hand. In the caverns of France and Spain are still to be seen hundreds of spirited pictures of animals now extinct, like the two-horned rhinoceros, the great elk, and the bison. The most primitive drawings are outlines in black or red. Silhouettes come next, often with contours accentuated by incising of the rock wall. The high-tide of rock painting comes with the filling in of outlines with red, brown, or yellow, with shading to suggest relief, and with the depiction of difficult poses. Among the bisons at Altamira in Spain, which are more than half life size, is a brown beast that charges like a modern Andalusian bull upon a matador. But realism may be said to overreach itself in the picturing of the wild boar with twice four legs—one set posed for standing, the other stretched in the gallop.[1] The other extreme, that of conventionalization, may be seen in a rock shelter of later period at Cogul in Spain. Instead of imitative pictures we have here schematic drawings or diagrams, in the fewest possible lines. One that represents a big elk and a small man about to shoot an arrow might be a picture-letter of some American Indian of recent times. Here the forms do not exist for their own sake, as should be the case in painting, but tend to become symbols. Attempting thus to impart ideas instead of resting in suggestive images, leads away from art toward the practical and the scientific.

[1]In this connection one thinks somewhat satirically of the twentieth century Futurists. "Consider, for instance, the famous Futurist statement that 'a running horse has not four legs, but twenty.' Then contemplate (Giacomo) Balla's picture, 'Dog and Person in Movement,' to which this theory is applied. Neither the dog nor the person seems to move at all. They are static figures with blurred triangles resembling lace where their legs should be. Such a juvenile artifice to give the effect of movement is certainly not modern or even novel. Long prior to the Futurists, caricaturists and comic journalistic draughtsmen sought to express action by placing circular lines round the wagging tails of dogs or by drawing long sweeping lines behind a swiftly moving figure to indicate from what direction it had come and the rapidity of locomotion. Such inventions are outside the field of aesthetics."—Willard Huntington Wright, *Modern Painting*, 1915, p. 272.

Egyptian painting

From cave dwellings to the palaces and temples of Egypt at the dawn of civilization is a vast advance. But painting did not keep pace with architecture and sculpture. Wall decoration was no longer incised as with paleolithic man, but sculptured in low relief, and three times as many colors were available. Yet perspective was still unknown, figures were stiffly upright, and grouping was in parallels and perpendiculars. Egyptian painting sought convention and formula, these being felt to contribute the solidity and perduration so deeply craved. Frontality, or the turning of the human body toward the spectator, while the face was drawn in easy profile, was universal; action, as of the Altamira bisons, was unattempted; natural objects had prescribed "local colors"—men were painted brown, and women yellow.

Cretan frescoes

Even the gifted Greeks, who came down from the northeast to found European civilization in Crete, stiffened in the colossal Egyptian shadow. But in the period of Minos, after 2000 B. C., began that splendid development exemplified in the palace at Gnossos, explored in the last quarter century. Here have been unearthed walls covered with frescoes almost as brilliant as when painted fifteen centuries before our era. Profiles have not yet been displaced, and men's faces are painted reddish brown, but many of the figures are life size, and grouped to show varied natural action, athletic, martial, social. A Frenchman who saw the elegant ladies, brightly dressed in low-cut gowns, emphatic of eye and lip, and with cunningly coiffured hair, exclaimed, "They are Parisians!"

Painting in Greece

So far, we have seen only wall paintings: it was almost another thousand years before artists used movable wooden panels. The famous Greek painters are the draughtsman Polygnotus of the fifth century B. C., and the colorists Zuexis, Parrhasius, and Apelles of the fourth. Blue pigment is said to have been unobtainable by Polygnotus, while green was unknown in the period. "Design was supreme," writes a modern author-

ity; "color remained an accessory; and this manner, flat, pale, proud, nervous, and passionate, was, it would seem, the characteristic style of antique painting at its finest." And again: "The pictures of Zeuxis, Parrhasius, and Apelles, which were executed upon wooden panels, were easily carried off into Italy by the Romans when they conquered Greece..."[1] When these artistically realistic Greek paintings perished we do not know, but they certainly affected tradition and helped the Italian revolt in the thirteenth century against the cold conventionalities of the Byzantine panels that had meantime drifted to all the Mediterranean shores.

One is tempted in this connection to repeat the well-worn stories about the Greek painters handed down by tradition and recorded in Pliny's *Natural History*. "The story runs that Parrhasius and Zeuxis entered into competition, Zeuxis exhibiting a picture of some grapes, so true to nature that the birds flew up to the wall of the stage. Parrhasius then displayed a picture of a linen curtain, realistic to such a degree that Zeuxis, elated by the verdict of the birds, cried out that now at last his rival must draw the curtain and show his picture. On discovering his mistake he surrendered the prize to Parrhasius, admitting candidly that he had deceived the birds, while Parrhasius had deluded himself, a painter. After this we learn that Zeuxis painted a boy carrying grapes, and when the birds flew down to settle on them, he was vexed with his own work, and came forward saying, with like frankness, 'I have painted the grapes better than the boy, for had I been perfectly successful with the latter, the birds must have been afraid.' "[2]

Now opinions as to what constitutes a faithful or a deceiving imitation of nature widely differ, but a point to notice is that in the age of Pliny as in that of the caveman the aim of painting was assumed to be realistic representation of natural objects. The court beauties of the Cretan frescoes doubtless insisted on recognizing themselves. In much of the

[1] *The Technique of Painting*, by C. Moreau-Vauthier, 1917, ch. 1.
[2] Pliny, *Natural History*, liber 35, transl. Jex-Blake.

painting and in most of the criticism of modern times, moreover, there is the same implication. The case of Byzantine art, which touches ours in time, appears at first somewhat exceptional. Arising in Constantinople as the development of Greco-Roman art under various Asiatic influences, and addressed primarily to the decoration of Christian shrines in an age of asceticism, it was narrow in range and heavily formal in method—anything but lifelike. An historian remarks that Byzantine art inherited too much. Pictures of the late Hellenistic period abounded; they were conventional; the Byzantine artist copied them, thus working at two removes from nature. A naturalistic technique was, indeed, impossible in works designed for holy uses: world and flesh were but other names for the devil that monkish fanatics sought to cast out by whatever devilish devices. The need of the church was for stereotyped images to illustrate religious story and for symbols to embody metaphysical notions. Byzantine art was therefore naturally intellectual and ethical; to its credit, it became also splendidly decorative. Viewed in the light of its intention, that of lending grace and color to the cold dignities of sacred architecture, while idealizing or even refuting nature, it can be understood as having given both edification and delight.

Byzantine art

Byzantine painting, and through it that of Renaissance Italy, was affected by the mosaic work that culminated in the decorations of St. Sophia in the sixth century and of St. Mark's in the eleventh. Figures wrought in mosaic fell naturally into straight lines and balanced masses of color; simplicity in conception and breadth in execution served best both the architectural and the doctrinal purposes. Byzantine figure painting was similarly linear and stiff, its human forms typical, its composition angular and arbitrary. "The most characteristic features of Byzantine landscape," adds an authority, "are hills symmetrically disposed in pairs, with a conventional vegetation of trees, or plants, the smaller of which are sometimes dotted over the surface in such a way as to resemble a continuous pattern. The hills are composed of

prism-shaped rocks, the tops of which form sloping or horizontal planes, and are strongly lighted, contrasting with the vertical sides remaining in deep shadow. The trees which cling to this barren ground are mere schematic forms of 'mushroom' and other types, copied and recopied until all connection with nature is lost: only cypresses, palms, and dead trunks faithfully suggest the vegetation of the actual world. In the foreground a formal band of green is diapered with conventional flowers."[1]

Such was traditional painting in both east and west in the thirteenth century. It drew no subjects from nature; its medium was tempera, not yet oil-color; it knew nothing of light and shade, perspective, or organic composition. From its deadly formalism the first moderns, particularly Duccio and Giotto, broke only gradually away in Renaissance Italy; its original breadth they vitalized with their sincerity; its pompousness they converted to dignity by imparting new human significance. Nor were they quite unaided, for from among the budded and quiring stones of the Gothic cathedrals to the north swept down a freshening spirit, a spirit aspiring yet so charged with the breath of earth that within another century in the Low Countries it produced the first flowering of naturalism in painting. Duccio, it is believed, had Byzantine training, perhaps in Constantinople itself, and he has been called the last of the great artists of antiquity. He bettered his instruction by giving life and individuality to his figures, by suggesting space, and by establishing relationships among his forms, which is the beginning of composition. Giotto, the friend of Dante, achieved greater freedom and revealed powers that make him the first of the moderns. He looks at life, and dares to bring living men into saintly companies. His figures remain statuesque, yet have grace in their dignity; they attain reality through modeling and foreshortening. Tradition picks up Giotto as a shepherd boy scratching pictures on a boulder, but he retains the traditional landscape

Fourteenth century Italians

[1] O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, 1911, p. 244.

with rocky hills and sculptured trees, and upon occasion introduces sheep that resemble rodents. His great frescoes at Assisi and elsewhere are bound by prescribed story, yet are nobly decorative, and in scenes like the meeting of a husband and wife at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem are movingly human.

Giotto died in 1336, and a hundred years later his less virile qualities came to second blossoming in the altar flowers of Fra Angelico, copies of whose Virgins and angels enjoy today a dubious popularity where the works of other primitives are unknown. In this period also another monk, one who could not be confined within cloister walls, produced churchly paintings vigorous in drawing and characterization. This was Lippo Lippi of whom Browning writes—the "prior's niece" of the poem, or some other woman, did creep into Fra Lippo's pictures as into his life. With Botticelli, a pupil of Lippo's, the idealized human form took on lightness and rhythmic movement still found admirable. The naturalism of Giotto attained most effective statement in both the teachings and the paintings of Masaccio in the first half of the fifteenth century.

The painters so far mentioned belong to the earlier Tuscan or Florentine schools, but the Venetians were likewise reaching eminence. Mantegna expresses much of the Greco-Roman spirit in his choice of subject, while his aloof and masculine style contrasts sharply with the intimate and feminine style of Angelico. Giovanni Bellini, like Angelico, delights to paint the Virgin and Child, but he enfleshes them nobly, and in general exhibits a mastery of light and shade and a vigorous elegance of line that only the greatest have equalled. The supreme Venetian colorists, Giorgione and Titian, were born within the lifetime of Bellini, while Tintoretto the dramatic and Paul Veronese, noted for his pomp and poetry, sprung immediately afterwards to the van. Meantime in Milan and Rome Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael Sanzio had

united greatness of conception with marvelous technique. The protean genius of Leonardo, who was sculptor, engineer, scientific investigator, as well as painter, remains a world's wonder, but his varied interests and his artistic scrupulousness have left us with but four completed paintings beside the many drawings. The "Last Supper" and the "Monna Lisa Gioconda" are known to everyone. During four years, it is said, the master worked upon the latter picture, with the result that the smiling lips and waiting eyes have intrigued the ages. Yet the substance and sum of what Pater[1] and others less articulate have seen in them would perhaps

Leonardo

[1]"From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams; and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had she and the dream grown thus apart, yet so closely together? Present from the first, incorporeal in Leonardo's thought, dimly traced in the designs of Verocchio, she is found present at last in Il Giocondo's house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes and flute players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. . . .

"The presence that thus so strangely rose beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years man had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all 'the ends of the world are come,' and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty into which the soul with all its maladies has passed? All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was mother of Helen of Troy, and as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea."—Walter Pater, *The Renaissance,* ed. 1910, pp. 124-5.

astonish Leonardo, as Ruskin's reading of the landscapes of Turner astonished that artist.

These are not new things to say, but the old masters must still be talked about, if we are to talk intelligently about those who have since entered into the fruit of their labors.[2] Leonardo, then, has pre-eminently what Sir Joshua Reynolds called the grand style in painting—the style that springs from nobility of conception, mastery of tool and medium, synthesis attaining to simplicity not to be reached by the simple, spirituality that quickens the clay of the concrete. The sculptor in Leonardo required a solid if flexible framework beneath the flesh he painted. But he would leave no chiseled forms like those of Giotto or Michelangelo, who were also sculptor-painters; hence the softening atmosphere that not a few after comers have imitated to disguise incompetence in draughtsmanship. Finally, Leonardo, like Rubens and Velasquez, reveals his greatness in composition—the imposition upon discrete sensuous and intellectual elements of that vitalizing rhythm which is form creative. This arrangement of selected units in accordance with a conception may, of course, be so unnatural and arbitrary as to result in the mere galvanism of the conventionalists and academics; wrought by the god-like master it imparts to every element a social augmentation, and constrains centrifugal energies to seek a common goal. With the great Chinese and Japanese it rests in the decorative abstractness of two-dimensional design; with the greatest of the Europeans it shepherds living things within the deep of space.

[2]"If led to speak on the marvelous personality of his art, Degas will say, 'It is strange, for I assure you no art was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and study of the great masters; of inspiration, spontaneity, temperament—temperament is the word—I know nothing. When people talk about temperament it always seems to me like the strong man at the fair, who straddles his legs and asks some one to step up on the palm of his hand.' Again, in reply to an assurance that he of all men now working, whether with pen or pencil, is surest of the future, he will say, 'It is very difficult to be great as the old masters were great. In the great ages you were great or you did not exist at all, but in these days everything conspires to support the feeble'."—George Moore, *Impressions and Opinions,* 1913, "Degas," p. 228-9.

Tactility and movement

Since the great men we have been speaking of were draughtsmen rather than painters, it is proper to mention here what a modern expert[1] has described as the chief artistic qualities of figure work. When we look at a velvet gown, a fluffy kitten, a shining knife, we have more or less vivid feelings of touch, tactual images. And again, the lines not only of a darting swallow or of an opening rose, but also of a quiet tree or an animated face bring a sense of resistance, of change of direction that combine into images of form and motion. Now surface and texture, solidity and movement, as well as light and color, can be somehow abstracted from nature by the painter and fixed upon canvas, there to affect the more sensitive among us with a power strangely greater than nature's own. The works of Giotto, Leonardo, and Michelangelo, and those of Velasquez, Rembrandt, and Rubens, of El Greco, Degas and Cézanne, have such tactile and movement values. Their desire to render these values is one of the reasons why painters and particularly draughtsmen prefer the nude figure.

Raphael

Raphael Sanzio is not placed among the mighty draughtsmen, nor yet among the pre-eminent colorists, but he remains the beloved apostle of art. A Hellene of the Renaissance, he saw all the loveliness of earth and devoted it to heavenly uses. He gathered the fairest and noblest of human forms into unsurpassed compositions such as the "School of Athens" and the "Triumph of the Church." Beneath his touch, materiality continually broke into some glowing trinity like the petals of an Easter lily, or fluttered into pattern like doves about a duomo. He took the work of other men also, by virtue of the sympathetic insight and the deftness of hand that enabled him to dream the dreams of others and tell them better with his own brush. His assimilation of Perugino may be seen in "La Belle Jardinière" and the "Ansidei Madonna," while his "Marriage of the Virgin," say the *cognoscenti,* is like the work of Francia. In the first

[1]Bernhard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance,* 1906, *passim.*

decade of the sixteenth century, the period of his Madonnas,[1] when he was still in the early twenties, he used at will the subjects and the manner of the already famous Leonardo and Michelangelo. He went on swiftly to paint the great frescoes of the Vatican and the beautiful revealing portraits, living through a tropic summer of fruitfulness, with fame, love, and death crowding one another at his threshold.[2]

Such was the wonder that was Raphael, and wonder he remains when the experts, not in malice, have revealed his faults. He showed an over-refinement of subject, and an emphasis upon technique, that later seemed to sanction the art of Greuze and Bouguereau and sent the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood back to the Italian Primitives. In some moods and in some compositions he is coolly pretty rather than austerely beautiful. His drawing lacks the vigor and certainty of Leonardo's. His coloring is often more soothing than refreshing. He has not the abashing power of pose and movement seen in Michelangelo. It is even possible for anyone to look at first with indifference upon some easy Raphael. Sir Joshua Reynolds confesses that during his years of study in Italy he had to learn to admire the painter of the "Sistine Madonna" and the "Triumph of the Church." "Notwithstanding my disappointment," he continues, "I proceeded to copy some of those excellent works. I viewed them again and again; I even affected to feel their merit and to admire them more than I really did. In a short time a new taste and new perceptions began to dawn upon me, and I was con-

[1]"The 'beautiful woman' is apt to be what the real artist considers a bad subject—one in the painting of which it is exceedingly difficult, if at all possible, to present form or line. Such a woman, delightful though she may be in life, and ethically and socially perhaps the most desirable type, is apt to become in art a vulgar chromo. Many efforts have been made in our times, by artists who were mere Illustrators . . . to change the ideal; but the fatalistic and ailing woman they tried to make popular, though more attractive to tastes bored with health and lovableness, is not in itself more artistic than the other. So the type of beauty to which our eyes and desire still return is Raphael's—the type which for four hundred years has fascinated Europe."—B. Berenson, *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, p. 119.

[2]His "Donna Velata" in the Pitti Palace, Florence, is supposedly a portrait of the woman Raphael loved. He died in 1520, in his thirty-eighth year.

vinced that I had originally formed a false opinion of the perfection of art, and that this great painter was well entitled to the high rank which he holds in the estimation of the world."[1] We may leave the last word to Browning, who knew the Renaissance, and Italy, and the heart of man. It is Andrea del Sarto who is made to speak—the "faultless painter," Raphael's contemporary—sitting at twilight in his studio and talking to the wife who had let him be his weaker self.

> Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
> The Urbinate who died five years ago.
> ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it to me.)
> Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
> Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
> Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
> Above and through his art—for it gives way;
> That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
> A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
> Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
> He means right—that a child may understand.
> Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
> But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
> Out of me, out of me! .....
> I hardly dare .... yet, only you to see,
> Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
> Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! Rub it out!

Michelangelo

If for del Sarto, great draughtsman and colorist too, life and art became "a twilight piece," for the sculptor Michelangelo when at sixty he began that amazing fresco, a seven years' labor, the "Last Judgment," in the Sistine Chapel at Rome, life was what to his death at eighty-nine it remained, a triumphant struggle. His sculptured Moses, so royally calm, yet so challenging with energy, becomes in our thought the master himself. He would not paint easel-pictures—that was no work for a man: give him the fresh walls, where every stroke must stand in its first wrath! The influence of such an artist upon painting was not surprisingly to its loss, for to him line and light and shade and explosive movement were the creative elements, and color merely decorative. But after him, fundamental drawing could not forget its acme.

[1]Quoted by Randall Davies, *Six Centuries of Painting*, 1914, p. 271.

Form, space and color

It is drawing and modelling that have so far seemed of chief importance, and indeed there are those today who believe that to achieve the third dimension is the prime concern of the painter. The images of the natural world upon our retina, they remind us, have but the two dimensions, yet all our motor experience of space and our thought about the distances and solidities of objects so supplement the visual report that we make our own pictures, as it were, in the round. In this view, drawing, space-composition, and tactility are the best of painting. Others assert that painting is distinctively the art of coloring, reminding us that not even a line exists except through modification of lighted space, while color is but light variously reflected. Line, light and shade, and even perspective, if thought of apart from color, they point out, result in literalness, in illustration, instead of in sensuous and imaginative decoration. In the second view, the greatest painters are the Venetian colorists of the sixteenth century, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, with Paul of Verona and Correggio of Parma, and later masters who deliberately or by instinct took a similar path to expression, such as Rubens and Velasquez of the seventeenth century. Of these men, Giorgione, Titian in all but his latest work, and Rubens employ the brightest and richest colors; Velasquez, on the other hand, like Vermeer, plays his color harmonies in a lower key.[1]

[1]"I hope not to be suspected of confusing mere polychromy with splendid coloring when I say that we can properly speak of a man as a great colorist only when he employs something like the whole scale, and compels a harmony out of the extremes of the palette. We need not say that a man who has limited his palette or even renounced color entirely is thereby less an artist. There are fortunately many kinds of excellence. But we merely darken counsel when we insist that a man who has subordinated color to tone or mood is nevertheless a great colorist. To illustrate—Titian, Giorgione, Veronese, Rubens, Claude, Vermeer, Watteau, Tiepolo, Turner, Renoir, these may, it seems to me, fairly be called great as colorists. Velasquez is great at times in this regard and could have been anything he wished, but since his conception of character led him progressively to the subordination of color to tone and atmospheric effect, we may more accurately call him a fine than a great colorist. Rembrandt, I feel, belongs also to this category; in fact, one can hardly conceive any supremacy in painting as such without the color sense fully developed."—Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., *Estimates in Art,* 1916, 204-5.

It is the colorists and tonalists that have most influenced painting in the last hundred years. French artists of the early nineteenth century and painters in general since then have learned much from Velasquez, to whom they are indebted for the knowledge of color values made so much of in modern art. In the king's black velvet mantle, in his white lace and feather, Velasquez saw the play of light, and it became his peculiar pleasure to render those shadings that mark the plunge of light into semi-solids, its diffusion through darkened space. Color values are measured in degrees of light. Thus the various tints of blue are said to have varying values, while a given tint of blue or of yellow is found to have the same value as a certain other tint of red or of green. Whistler, who studied Velasquez, delighted in *les nuances*—he displayed his virtuosity in the three paintings of the girl in white and in the famous portrait of his mother. Nowadays every painter who takes his subject from nature must see to it that fidelity to fact does not leave the painted sky or larkspur too blue, the lilies or the lace too white, the farmhouse or the lips too red to harmonize with the other colored masses in his picture. Nature does not settle values, though atmosphere often softens and blends clashing colors as in an old-fashioned garden. The painter will not let a leaf that reflects the sunshine stab our eyes, nor a poinsettia burn them: he proportions their quantity and intensity of color, subduing them to subtler harmonies.

Velasquez

Velasquez, who has taught so many painters, owes almost nothing to any one. At nineteen he was painting the "Water Seller of Seville," a work that painting in the last hundred years. French artists of the early a Spanish king afterward made his personal gift to the victor of Waterloo. Ten years after the painting of the "Water Seller," Velasquez, then court painter to Philip IV, entertained Rubens, a special envoy to the king. The great Fleming remained for months, discharging his mission, painting vast pictures, talking with his peer Velasquez. It seems likely that it was Rubens who finally obtained for the younger artist

the long desired permission from the king to visit Italy. We know that Velasquez went thither soon, and did not find much in Raphael, but copied Tintoretto and Titian. Home again, he painted as before—with a sort of heavenly realism, such as the angel Michael might employ upon the walls of the new Jerusalem. Whether painting king or beggar, a court fool deformed by nature or a court lady monstrous with hoops, a child or a dog, he gave austerity to splendor and glorified the decadent, the mean, the ugly. To know genius and feel its style one needs but to see even in reproduction the "Alessandro del Borro," the dwarf Antonio beside his dog, the "Venus of the Mirror," and then the exquisite pictures of the royal children. In contemplation of the paintings of Velasquez one touches the beauty of truth—something aloof and self-sufficing, unreckoning of the claims of man, beast, or god, yet to the thinker slipping through it to oblivion something that cleanses like icy waters in an extinct crater.

Rubens

The red warmth of headlong life, not the blue serenity of thought at dawn or twilight, strikes through all the work of Rubens. About the year 1600, a generation after the death of Michelangelo, the young Fleming brought an energy of imagination and execution comparable to his for eight years' training to Italy. Rubens is a great draughtsman and space-composer, yet he is a pure painter. His naked children are glowing apples from the tree of life; his men and women move like gods that know no god. Before such a painting as that of his second wife, Hèléne Fourment, with the two children one feels that once when sudden sunlight flooded the studio Rubens merely swept his hands through it and swirled its gold into the draperies that like a calyx enfold the womanly form. In the larger canvases that today dominate their galleries the sumptuous figures seem to the half-closed eye but lifted waves upon a tide of color. Looked at steadily, these pictures are mighty compositions, whose too human forms drag the imagination down. Michelangelo is true to bone and muscle, yet cleansing with the surge of mind;

Rubens drives the blood of passion through too palpable flesh.

Rembrandt van Rijn does not equal his fellow-citizen in composition or in coloring. His care is for chiaroscuro, atmosphere, and characterization. **Rembrandt** He gives us unforgettable human beings summoned like ourselves out of mystery. Rubens is heroically realistic in that his men and women swing with such abandon into the dance of life. Rembrandt, painter of guardsmen, syndics, crones, that are indubitably individual and Dutch, is yet the idealist. Glowing atmosphere has been called the central figure in his pictures. As he draws a human form out of fathomless darkness into warm light, he strangely moves the gazer's soul.

There are other noted names that we can here but mention. Following Velasquez in Spain there was Murillo, a colorist whose tenderness occasionally touches sentimentality; and in the next century Goya, who painted goblins, kings, and mistresses as with a stiletto, and influenced the Frenchmen who first waged war against the academic tyranny. In the north, Holbein, Van Dyck, and Franz Hals painted the portraits we have not ceased to copy. It should be remarked that in north and south alike the seventeenth century saw figures from cottage, tavern, and gutter wrought into animated picture. Humble life became a recognized artistic subject; *genre* painting, so long practiced by Dutch and Flemings, brought the artist close to the popular heart. New social concepts prepared the public to find pictorial beauty in the work of such nineteenth century painters as Courbet, Millet, and Israels.

3

We have not so far given a stroke of the pen to landscape: it was indeed long before it received more than a few conventional brush strokes from the painters themselves. Michelangelo had no desire for a natural background. Leonardo's "Virgin of the Rocks" draws its hills and waters from classic dreamland; but in his Martyrdom of St. Sebastian there is diversified river val- **Landscape painting**

ley guarded by mountains. Leonardo has left also a red-chalk drawing of a cloudburst above an Alpine village that has an effect of mass and atmosphere reminding one of his unguessed Chinese[1] contemporaries of the Ming dynasty or the men of the earlier Sung. Raphael is more explicit if not also sentimental: beyond his Madonnas one glimpses hazy mountains beneath tender skies. In an altar piece of Perugino may often be found some green and gold elysium. Titian and Correggio blocked in olive brown leafy masses, but it was to make more radiant their flushing figures. Everywhere the incidental skies are blue, the clouds sculptured to bear the weight of cupids or angels. Tintoretto makes more of natural background, but prefers a theatrical cloud-effect or an over-modelled shore sloping to a mythic sea. Giorgione is the one who gives us a broad and lovely stretch of country—eclipsed, of course, by those superb figures of the "Venetian Pastoral." Even with Velasquez, landscape is but occasional and reduced to stage setting for some dramatic personage.

The Van Eycks

It was in the north that painting was least hampered by tradition and earliest in approach to common human life and to the earth features that conditioned it. In the first third of the fifteenth century, while in Italy Fra Angelico was painting in fresco or tempora lovely figures out of cloistral vision, Hubert and John Van Eyck in Flanders made oil colors practicable and drew plain men and women straight from life to the immortality of art. With them landscape was still but background, yet it

[1]Far Eastern painting differs in many ways from European. For example, in seeking decorative pattern, it largely ignores modelling. The Italian masters, on the other hand, were chiaroscurists: they used light and shadow not only to secure mass in three dimensions but as in Tintoretto particularly to attain dramatic (sometimes only theatrical) effects. Chiaroscuro is a matter of degrees or gradations of light throughout a picture. A painting in color reproduced in black and white will show proper chiaroscuro if its color values have been right. Darks and lights, whether in black and white or in colors, harmoniously related are known to the Japanese as *Notan*. (See A. W. Dow, *Composition, passim.*) Most entrancing effects of *Notan* are to be seen in the ancient Chinese ink-paintings of mountain views, of waterfowl, of flowering plants.

was of the natural lowland country, solid under men's weight and real to more than eyesight. A painting in the Louvre of "Virgin and Child with Chancellor Rolin"—by which of the gifted brothers is not known—yields through the columns of the central distance a triptych landscape of great charm. The portico opens upon a garden bright with flowering plants and bounded by a low wall over which two men are gazing upon the country below. They see first a Flemish town intersected by a river—perhaps the Maas—with its arched stone bridge, and beyond it the spreading valley with snow-capped mountains under pale blue sky. In this picture and in the panels of the "Adoration of the Lamb" the Van Eycks pointed out to painters the way across the pleasant earth.

Dutch naturalistic landscape

It was the nature-loving Dutch who conquered this new realm for art. The "Landscape by Moonlight" of Rubens and the "Mill" of Rembrandt are among the greatest of their kind, though by figure painters working nearly two centuries before the Impressionists. Among those devoted to landscape were Hobbema and the greater Van Ruysdael. Faithful to the characteristic in natural scenes, these men must be called realists or naturalists. But like all true artists, they turned the casual and discrete to significance and order and inspired the idealistic or synthetic treatment to be seen in the great modern landscapists. In eighteenth century England Gainsborough, Crome, and Constable painted landscape perhaps more imaginatively, yet in the naturalistic manner of the Dutch, while in France Watteau, through sheer natural poetry, staged his gallantries within a ravishing Arcadia.

Claude and classic landscape

There was classical or academic landscape painting also, thanks chiefly to the Italianizing influence of Claude of Lorraine in the seventeenth century. Greco-Roman buildings, themes often drawn from classic myth or history, a studied and idealizing style, these make the landscapes of Claude seem in our day the height of artificiality. Their skies do not cloud, their waves

do not break, their human figures would flush at the prayers of no Pygmalion. Yet the classic qualities of selectiveness, order, balance, and clarity, of dignity, breadth, and reserve, have here their due effect as in the poetry of Milton or the music of Beethoven. The secret of both the strength and the weakness of such work is suggested in a dictum ascribed to Nicholas Poussin, a painter always mentioned with Claude: "The subject should be noble, and receive no quality from the person who treats it." Beside which should be placed the two characteristic modern views: "The subject may be anything, provided it be rendered truly in light, color, and atmosphere"; and, "The subject may be anything or nothing, provided an artist of power discovers himself in it and portrays himself through it." So we may turn, according as temperament dictates, to the lily pools and haystacks of Monet, or to the vesper woods of Corot.

4

Academic art

Certainly academicism did not go unchallenged, though intrenched in the Academy of Painting instituted under Louis XIV and kept militant by such men as Le Brun, David, and the great draughtsman Ingres. The academicians loved line and not color; they composed mathematically in hard studio light; their ideal was the sculpturesque; they despised low life, and rendered only personages, mythical, historical, or social. They delighted in the elegant and the sentimental, but undertook to stamp out the romantic and the naturalistic wherever these appeared. With Eugène Delacroix, whom they could embitter but not beat down, truly modern painting is sometimes said to begin. His dramatic story-picture, "Dante and Virgil crossing the Styx," exhibited in the Salon of 1822, raised a tumult of censure and acclaim. Familiarly romantic and not itself unacademic this picture seems to us, but as Delacroix painted on, drawing themes from Scott, Byron, Shakespeare, and the French Revolution, a return to actual life was made the fashion. The influence of the English Constable was a factor in the new landscape.

This storm did not settle within the lifetime of the first successful rebel, but its reverberations were as distant music when in 1863 the jury of the Salon rejected paintings by Manet, Monet, Fantin-Latour, Pissarro, Vollon, and Whistler, but allowed the new men an exhibition in the *Salon des refusés.* Manet was execrated as immoral because of his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe,* though he pointed out as its prototype Giorgione's "Venetian Pastoral" hanging in the Louvre. The real offense of these men was that they had taken their easels out of the studios into *pleine aire* or open space, had begun to depict the old earth with mankind at her breasts, and were flooding their canvases with light, color, and atmosphere. They professed realism, but were soon dubbed Impressionists, probably because one of Monet's later rejected pictures was entitled simply "An Impression."

Impressionism

The doctrine of Impressionism is that the painter should try to reproduce upon canvas the aspect of the natural scene as it strikes his bodily eye at a given moment, taking care that previous knowledge of the forms and colors shall not pervert the vision and falsify emotionally the record. Pleinairism meant much to the new men, but the peculiar method of painting associated with Monet and Pissarro particularly was not adopted by all. This method consisted in covering the canvas with little dabs of pure and often contrasting colors, with the design that the eye of an observer standing at the proper distance should find the colors mingling with a vitality not attainable by mixtures from the palette. Corot, Diaz, and Millet, well-known members of the group that worked in the forest of Fontainebleau, did not adopt this "divisionism" in applying their colors, and indeed preferred subdued effects of color and light.

It is amusing in connection with this supposedly quite modern wielding of piant to read of its parallel in Greco-Roman art. Referring to a so-called illusionism that persisted into Byzantine painting of the fifth century, an archaeologist reminds us again of the solidarity of the human mind. "In this style the artist so depicts his subjects that

they may appear natural at a certain distance and that distance only. When examined closely, the subject is found to be a crude arrangement of diverse colors placed harshly in juxtaposition; at the calculated distance the colors blend, and the proper effect is produced. That such methods were employed in late Roman or late Hellenistic art is indisputable; they may have developed from scene painting and the scenic Pompeian style; they were always imposed upon the artist in mosaic, where a face or other detail is grotesque at a near view, and natural only when the spectator stands sufficiently far away."[1]

If one could stand sufficiently far away from European and American painting of the last twenty-five years its characteristic colors and forms would reveal their aesthetic value and intellectual meaning. So various and revolutionary does it appear and so out of perspective for us that only experts can discuss it without seeming parrots or donkeys. And even the experts do in these premises painfully disagree. Impressionism we may assume to have been by this time assimilated by the conservatives, but what a barmecide feast they now find spread before them in the works of such men as Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso, Hodler and Kandinsky, Marin, Nevinson, and Wyndham Lewis, Russell and Macdonald-Wright, with their countless syncopating or synthesizing associates! The output of these "Bolsheviks in art" is of all qualities and tendencies, but is conveniently lumped even at the exhibitions as Post-Impressionism.

Renoir

In range and charm the most notable of the moderns is Auguste Renoir, colorist and composer, who died in 1919 at the age of seventy-eight. He practiced figure-painting, still life, landscape, and *genre,* all as if on a summer holiday. His human figures have the grace, movement, warmth of life: a lady in black furs, a woodcutter's daughter carrying her own sunshine, is something definitely created out of vibrant color, and as natural as a flower, quiet between breezes. He seems always instinctively consummate,

[1] O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology,* 1911, p. 247.

yet his advance in breadth and ntauralness can be realized by a glance at mere black-and-white reprints of the *Baigneuses* of 1885 and the same subject slightly rearranged but entirely reconceived and differently expressed of 1902. All that the last century accomplished in light, color, and the organization of volumes into a single whole, may be discovered in the paintings of Renoir.

Cézanne

It is commonly said that in those years when Renoir was summing up one artistic period, Paul Cézanne was beginning another. The latter was content with nothing that others or himself had done: to the end of his life in 1906 he was struggling to "realize" something within himself that could not quite take form in paint. In this respect he was one of the Expressionists. He labored almost muscularly with volumes—and thereby prompted the heresy of Cubism. Here he surely realized: one feles that when the bather on the bank in one of his pictures shall step into the stream there will be a displacement of water. Cézanne appears to some a reactionary in lighting, for he will have neither *pleine aire* nor the light of the studio to model objects with shadow. Instead of imagining light as falling upon his picture, he tries to evoke it from within. He cared little for such portraiture of individual figures as might come from recording peculiarities of feature or expression, but undertook to reveal through the whole body the set of its animating nature, in relation both to the particular action presented and the universal qualities of humanity. To secure these objects, Cézanne took any liberty with familiar forms. Backs bend, hips carry an overweight, bodies press upon the earth; roofs sag, houses lean against each other or take angles to shame the builders. "Cézanne paints the ugly," cry the objectors, "and he paints that untruly."

Aesthetic beauty and truth

The questions of aesthetic truth and aesthetic beauty have lurked sphinxlike at every turn of our road, and may for an instant be looked in the eye. Nobody nowadays quite dares to say that the production of the beautiful is the aim of art, and to let it go

at that. Tolstoi has recorded the inconsistencies of the beauty hypothesis, and De Gourmont and the Freudians leave us uncomfortable about the beautiful however conceived. Mr. Clive Bell in discussing pictures prefers the term "significant form," explaining, "... When I speak of significant form, I mean a combination of lines and colors (counting white and black as colors) that moves me aesthetically," and elsewhere, "... form behind which we catch a sense of ultimate reality."[1] Mr. Charles Marriott makes the matter concrete: "Better than any other modern painter, Gauguin exemplifies the power of 'significant form'; the direct action of design which makes a picture both moving and memorable."[2] Mr. Bell's phrase at least rescues one from preconceptions concerning the material, theme, or method proper to an artist. The bulbous nose seen in Ghirlandaio's "Old Man with a Child," the unwonted shuffled colors flung at us by some Cubist, the wilfully distorted natural forms in the paintings of Cézanne—call them ugly if you wish, but do not prejudge them as of no aesthetic value. If the artist can but bring the sensuously ugly into structural composition or the spiritually ugly into profound relationships, he may reveal it as an altar of the unknown God.

And truth? We know it beyond human compass, but believe it also to reside in relationships that may be material and superficial or spiritual and profound—the latter often beneath external forms which we call discordant or untrue. As for the walls and bodies painted by Cézanne, he did not profess to follow the externalities of nature more than did Michelangelo. It is superficial criticism that cavils at the attenuated limbs in Botticelli or El Greco, the ruddy flesh in Rubens, or the oaken angularities in Millet. Even Matisse —he is not trying to paint a pleasing likeness: he sees his woman at the cabaret table as warped by something inward, and flattened in a jostle of colored surfaces. That is the

[1]Clive Bell, *Art*, "Significant Form."
[2]Charles Marriott, *Modern Movements in Painting*, chap. 9.

truth he aims to tell, and therefore the only truth we have an æsthetic right to ask of him.

5

So careless, then, was Cézanne of prettiness and external fact, so intent upon revealing a form he read into things, that after him the young men asked why they should paint in the old ways at all. Some of them, indeed, have declared that they do not wish to render nature either realistically or idealistically, that in short they will not bother with nature at all, but through color alone render abstract form. "To most of them," writes Mr. Bell, "his chief importance—as an influence, of course—was that he had removed all unnecessary barriers between what they felt and its realization in form. It was his directness that was thrilling. But to an important minority the distortions and simplifications—the reduction of natural forms to spheres, cylinders, cones, etc.—which Cézanne had used as means, were held to be in themselves of consequence because capable of fruitful development."[1]

Cubism

The Cubism invented by Picasso makes painting an art of time as well as of space, by wresting from a form the aspects it may present in successive moments, somewhat as a juggler with cards springs a pack into the air, letting us see a number of its constituents at a glance. To this "simultaneity" was added a sort of analysis of the object as seen from several points of view—above, below, from this side and that. The Cubists are concerned with drawing, not color, making use chiefly of brown, black, and white to depict the rectangular planes into which for the most part they have shattered reality.

Waiving questions of the painter's medium and of the territory to which it confines him, a fatal fact about Cubism aesthetically considered is that to apprehend its product one must reunite the elements of experience it has so triumphantly sundered, must exchange a synthesis for its analysis. A Cubist picture is a puzzle to be solved, a chaos aforethought

[1] Clive Bell, *Since Cézanne*, 1922, p. 15.

to be organized. Its appeal is therefore not primarily to sense and emotion, but to thought. Upon any definition, it thus falls short of art. It all but breaks with the previously existing, so difficult does it make reconstruction and recognition. But for those who wish to see painting a non-representative art, Cubism has served the cause.

Futurism

The Futurists attempt to transform moods into color and line hitherto unexperienced, as music transforms them into tone and melody. As the Cubists have broken up volume, these break up action. An arrival or a departure is to be expressed by a heaping up of dim kaleidoscopic images. Futurists are not of one doctrine and purpose: they range from Cubism to metaphysics, but tend on the whole to symbolism. A picture by Marc Chagall, entitled "Ich und das Dorf," fills the canvas with slightly modeled forms that suggest a heap of children's toys—blocks, torn-out pages, broken houses, dolls and animals of all sizes. To the right is a large human face, bright green, in profile, while thrust toward it from the upper left is a great horse-head, white with blue cheek, a blue ear and a pink, and a big blue and white eye which rather dominates the whole composition. Inset upon the horse's cheek is a small cow being milked by a woman. Up the diagonal band of pink and white that divides the picture a small man is walking, and before him a woman stands on her head. At the bottom appears a plant or tree with strange fruitage, held by pale fingers. In the top right are little houses and shops against a dark blue ground. Jumbled images recollected after a tipsy ramble? Certainly the work[1] stirs one emotionally. But æsthetically?

Futurism has affected various arts: in Italy, the poet Marinetti leads the movement; in Germany, the Russian painter Kandinsky is its propagandist. The picture entitled *Pferde,* by Franz Marc (who died in the world war), shows two rude but dynamic horses in flat color, one blue and one black, against a red background. Surrounding these are all

[1]Reproduced in *Der Sturm,* ed. Herwarth Walden, Part 10, Berlin, 1921.

sorts of consonant yet strange blocks and elongations of color —green, blue, red, purple, white—outlined for the most part like the blue horse in black. The rhythmical creative movement sought by the group is felt in such a painting, likewise the massing of pure color seen in such different moderns as Gauguin and Matisse. An "improvisation" by Kadinsky called "Picture with White Form" suggests a village wooed by a whirlwind. The painter's *Art of Spiritual Harmony* explains the purpose of his group as escape from materialism to expression of the meaning of things and of the soul of man. Maeterlinck and Débussy are claimed for the fellowship; also the Russian composers Mussorgsky and Scriabin, and the Austrian Schönberg. In painting, the source of inspiration is again our Provençal. "Cézanne made a living thing out of a teacup, or rather he realized the existence of something alive. He raised still life to such a point that it ceased to be inanimate. He painted these things as he painted human beings, because he was endowed with the gift of divining the inner life of everything. His color and form are alike suitable to the spiritual harmony. A man, a tree, an apple, all were used by Cézanne in the creation of something that is called a 'picture,' and which is a piece of true inward and artistic harmony." So Matisse is said to attempt reproducing the divine, though he is gifted as a colorist and tends to overuse his material power. The Spaniard Picasso is found to have no taint of conventional beauty, but to seek only self-expression. Painting is becoming abstract: music shows the way.

Expressionism

It is evident that this Expressionism is the opposite of Impressionism. The pleinairists and pointillists sought means of recording more precisely the glowing forms of nature; they meant to be objective, to see freshly with the outward eye alone, and put on canvas what they saw. The various practicers of Expressionism today are variously subjective: for them natural forms become mere vehicles for the self, and are to be remoulded to the soul's need. Re-presentation is naturally often quite dis-

dained. Some of Kandinsky's improvisations look like thick spider webs or mantling pools that hold nondescript half-animate forms. Spirit in the act of creation would seem to be the intention. This is not painting, since it consists of line and surface, not color and volume. It is not the music it emulates, for it is symbolic, not self-sufficing, and metaphysical, not emotional.

Synchromism

As the experiments of Cézanne with volume led to Futurism and Vorticism,[1] so his dealing with color led to Synchromism.[2] This last name was chosen as suggesting that all the painter's work of the ultimate manner was to be done "with color." The movement was begun about 1913 by two Americans who were working in Germany, Morgan Russell and S. Macdonald-Wright. These artists had painted figure pieces, landscapes, and still life with free recasting of form and the use of non-natural colors. They aimed finally at abstract form, at the composition of non-representative volume through color.

Macdonald-Wright explains the results of his color experimentation. "By placing pure colors on recognizable forms (that is, by placing advancing colors on advancing objects, and retreating colors on retreating objects), I found that such colors destroyed the sense of reality, and were in turn destroyed by the illustrative contour. Thus, I came to the conclusion that color, in order to function significantly, must be used as an *abstract medium.* Otherwise the picture appeared to me merely as a slight, lyrical decoration. . . . I still adhered to the fundamental laws of composition (placements and displacements of mass as in the human body in movement), and created my pictures by means of color-form which, by its organization in three dimensions, resulted in rhythm. Later, recognizing that painting may extend itself into time, as well as being a simultaneous presentation, I saw the necessity for a formal climax which, though being ever in mind

[1]The organ of the Vorticists is *Blast,* and their chief spokesman Mr. Wyndham Lewis. *Cf. Modern Movements in Painting,* Charles Marriott, p. 159 ff.

[2]Cf. *Modern Painting,* Willard Huntington Wright, 1915, chap. 13.

as the final point of consummation, would serve as a *point d'appui* from which the eye would make its excursions into the ordered complexities of the picture's rhythms. Simultaneously my inspiration to create came from a visualization of abstract forces interpreted, through color juxtapositions, into terms of the visual."[1]

Mr. Russell leads us to the actual canvases. "My first synchromies represented a personal manner of visualizing by color rhythms; hence my treatment of light by multiple rainbow-like color-waves which, expanding into larger undulations, form the general composition. In my next step I was concerned with the elimination of the natural object and with the retention of color rhythms. An example of this period is the 'Cosmic Synchromy.' The principal idea in this canvas is a spiralic plunge into space, excited and quickened by appropriate color contrasts. In my latest development I have sought a 'form' which, though necessarily archaic, would be fundamental and permit of steady evolution, in order to build something at once Dionysian and architectural in shape and color. ... While there will probably always be illustrative pictures, it cannot be denied that this century may see the flowering of a new art of forms and colors alone. Personally, I believe that non-illustrative painting is the purest manner of aesthetic expression, and that, provided the basic demands of great composition are adhered to, the emotional effect will be even more intense than if there was present the obstacle of representation. Color is form; and in my attainment of abstract form I use those colors which optically correspond to the spatial extension of the forms desired."

The "Cosmic Synchromy," by Russell, may be described as an exquisite flowering of bubbles into worlds. "Organization 5," exhibited by Macdonald-Wright, is cosmic also—say, rainbows gone full circle and condensing into suns. In each case we have what may be called creative color. "Arm Organization in Blue-Green," also by Macdonald-Wright,

[1]These passages are to be found in the volume printed for the Forum Exhibition of American Painters, at New York, 1916.

evolves from a central curving form not too unlike a flexed arm, but breaks immediately from actuality. As color, this painting, too, is delightful, but its theme eventuates in cloud-like involutions like the others. On the whole, the arm motif, like the horse motif of which Franz Marc was fond, although non-natural, suggests comparisons with nature, and interferes with the desired singleness of impression. The uninitiate will not, if of open mind, be long disturbed by a sense of fantasticality in such efforts, but he may soon be conscious of monotony. The multifarious forms of the natural world, which have hitherto served as vehicles for the expression of the painter's every idea and mood, being now rejected, and the synchromized bubbles, rainbows, flowers, and jewels beginning to grow familiar, is there not danger of a return to mere arabesque? Certainly these first efforts of the Synchromists do not assure us that the art of abstract color is to command an infinity of patterns such as belong to the envied art of abstract tone.

We have now had glimpses of the art of painting as it advanced through the ages, from its beginning with line and the wish to transcribe and then to conventionalize external reality to its eventuation in color and the aim to interpret reality or to express the artist's self. Thus to see what has been attempted and with what hard-won success, must help us to enjoy more widely. Yet the varying practice and the opposing theories of the artists themselves may well leave us doubtful as to just what aims, methods, and qualities characterize that artistically best which we desire to appreciate. A few modern instances may help us to understand the painters and ourselves.

Twachtman

A friend of the American painter Twachtman tells us how the latter once failed to sell his picture called "The Brook in Midwinter." A young woman who had brought her brother to the exhibition urged him to buy this canvas at the catalogue price of five hundred dollars, but he demurred. Finally, he said, "Produce the brook, and I'll pay you five hundred." When the incident was related to

the artist he remained thoughtful for some time and then remarked, "It only teaches one that he should be careful in naming his pictures."

It will be noted that Twachtman made no promise to forego the imaginative and synthetic treatment which must result in decoration rather than illustration. Another of his canvases, however, the Brooklyn Bridge, shows that the painter could find interest and beauty in the piers and cables, tugs, scows, and smoke of our great seaport, which are here in sunlight and traced through line by line. A picture of almost identical subject which yet won derision and fame because of contrary treatment is the "Battersea Bridge," by Whistler. It will never be forgotten that the critic Ruskin, who had so happily interpreted painters as different as Giorgione, Tintoretto, and Turner, protested publicly that Mr. Whistler here proved himself a coxcomb "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face." The painter sued for damages —and was awarded a farthing. In court the judge asked to see the objectionable picture, which the artist had entitled "Nocturne in Blue and Silver." "Which part of the picture is the bridge?" inquired his lordship. And again, "Are those figures at the top of the bridge intended for people?" "They are just what you like," returned Whistler. "Is that a barge beneath?" "Yes. I am very much encouraged at your perceiving that. My whole scheme was only to bring about a a definite significance?"[1]

Whistler

It is obvious that in such a case we are again confronted with the question of artistic truth. Shall painting imitate nature, and give us only recognizable forms? Or shall the artist take what pleases him in nature, then arrange, distort, remould, to express some quality he discovers in the object, some mood or idea in himself? Is his picture finished when it has become a tonal harmony or only when it has also revealed a character, taught a lesson, or told a story?

Again artistic truth

[1] *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies,* by J. M. Whistler, ed. 1916, p. 7-8.

"Art is a language, and language is made to express thought," is a saying credited to Millet, painter of the "Angelus," the "Gleaners," the "Man with a Hoe." A Japanese authority declares: "Painting should have for its first object the expression of ideas, and as such it is invaluable, being by itself nothing."[1] Rodin, the sculptor of the "Thinker," of the "Burghers of Calais," and of the "Hand of God," demands first the eye to see nature, and then the technique to show her to us and, as it were, to herself. But he asks, "What right have they to forbid me to add meaning to form? How can they complain if, over and above technique, I offer them ideas? if I enrich those forms which please the eye with a definite significance?"[2]

Expression

That all art is expression is the current theory, and of course it must express something. This thing expressed will be the artist's self first of all, whether he intends it or not; and secondly something in the object which has suggested the form assumed now by the artistic medium. The painter Marsden Hartley, one of the contrivers of non-natural forms who has exhibited beside the professed synchromists, says of the water-colors of Cézanne: "They are expression itself. He has expressed, as he himself has said, what was his one ambition—that which exists between him and his subject. Every expressor relates solely himself. ... Objects are incidents. ... Anything is therefore pictural; it remains only to be observed and considered. All expression is illustration—of something."[3]

Concede that, metaphysically, we are not able to see the world or know life, but only our world, our life, and that even so-called realistic or objective art is but the self externalized. The fact of practical importance is nevertheless that the painter, unlike the musical composer, cannot accomplish expression in two terms, himself and his medium color, but only as it were in three terms, himself, color, and the shape that color takes upon his canvas. And visual forms upon

[1] *Three Essays on Painting,* Sei-ichi Taki, 1910.
[2] *Art,* by Auguste Rodin, 1912, pp. 153-4.
[3] *The Forum Exhibition of American Painters,* 1916.

canvas, like all images in the narrow sense, are concrete, drawing their substance from nature, however original or self-creative they appear. To Shakespearize it: "Nature is made better by no mean, but nature makes that mean: so, over that art which you say adds to nature, is an art that nature makes."

6

Pictorial purposes and qualities

As we go on to study pictures, there are a few specific points to be kept in mind. To be excellent, a painting must be both decorative and, in however slight degree, representative. It must first of all give immediate sensuous pleasure through color-forms, pleasure in the picture as a self-sufficing object, a beautiful thing that is its own excuse for being. It must in the second place bring us into emotional and imaginative contact with material reality, however this may be surcharged with the conceptual, the ideal, the dreaded or the wished for. It is a commonplace of modern art criticism that the critic should first discover something of the artist's purpose and that he may venture to judge or to evaluate only in reference to the goal aimed at, the medium chosen, the plan for adapting the means to the end, and finally the method of executing this plan. Four general purposes may be distinguished: first, to portray the subject as a peculiar part or aspect of the actual world; second, to make over some part of the actual world in accordance with an idea; third, to suggest or symbolize a mysterious and ideal world; fourth, to externalize the artist's self, to embody his dream. Or briefly: to depict, to cosmize, to symbolize,[1] to express the self. But we must remember that self-expression is possible only through a medium, and that it is more or less fully accomplished in every undertaking,

[1]In the National Gallery at Washington is the 'Love and Life,' given by the painter, George Frederick Watts, to the American people and accepted by Congress in 1894. The four stanzas of 'Life and Love' by Elizabeth Barrett Browning are framed below the picture. The coloring, the atmosphere, the drawing and pose of the nude figures of groping Life beside the strong angel, are all very lovely. The picture, despite its allegory, may be taken as the eye sees it, which is not possible with that other allegory, too-widely copied, of Hope seated upon a (class-room) world and touching the harp of life.

even those wherein the artist professes objectivity. And the nature of the medium conditions every art product.

What does the sensuous medium paint make possible? Actually, only an arrangement of colored masses in two dimensions, static in space and time. But through illusion acquiesced in by the observer—and no truly artistic three-dimensional picture could give us depth and volume except by aid of the observer's imagination—painting does conquer space. Outdoing Orpheus and Amphion, it chants into colorful existence not only man and beast, earth and ocean, but also gives to the mere images of these things life and movement that do not pass with time. Even without this illusion of depth in space, it creates patterns of sensuous charm and spiritual power, as may be seen in mural painting, in the screens of the great Chinese and Japanese painters, and in the somewhat disdained color prints of Japan—the *Ukiyo-ye,* or pictures of the fleeting world.

May not painting also establish dominion over time, by portrayal of living creatures in some pose of graceful or fateful transition that will make us conscious of the approaching as if it were here and now? The answer is that while the illusion of volume, depth, atmosphere, is optical and therefore proper to a visual medium, suggestion of temporal change can attain to illusion, if at all, only through an intellectual process provoked in the observer, who as it were paints other pictures to supplement the one he looks at. Painters deserve the reproach of literariness when like the professional illustrators they emphasize dramatic situation or try to suggest preceding and following scenes out of story; also when, as Rosetti, Watts, and Redon frequently do, they make their painted forms too palpably symbols for ideas. Painting should take no risk of becoming but glorified picture-writing.

Whatever the attempt, the individual painter's attitude toward reality and his mode of conceiving it will affect the result. Brangwyn writes upon canvas the epic of human and mechanic labor, but keeps the forms so broad, the colors

so rich that picture and not story is the thing we seek.[1] Degas astonishes with movement, the momentary poising and the eternal flitting of common forms out of the human tide. He launches upon Dead Sea waters also, where things float that should long since have sunk dreamlessly down.[2] Gauguin the mystic and Matisse the elvish child simplify to the extreme, seeking chiefly decorative pattern but also stamping upon the pictured object some characteristic they find in it or in

[1]"Mr. Brangwyn is about the least literary painter that ever lived. At the same time, it would be difficult to think of any other painter, in any country, who has given such full expression to the romance, the sheer romance, of commerce and industry. Most painters of industrial subjects betray what may be called a sociological tendency. . . . But he has no opinion about the ultimate meaning of work. He presents it, not as a fatality, like Millet; nor as a tragedy, like Meunier; nor as a moral duty, like Madox Brown; but as a form of expression with no ulterior motive." (Charles Marriott, *Modern Movements in Painting,* Scribner, pp. 142-3). Brangwyn goes down to the sea with ships, and one is reminded of the writers who have gone thither too: Kipling with his McAndrew; Masefield with his Dauber; Conrad with his Marlow.

[2]"But perhaps the most astonishing of all Degas' innovations are his studies of the nude. The nude has become well-nigh incapable of artistic treatment. Even the more naive are beginning to see that the well-known nymph exhibiting her beauty by the borders of a stream can be endured no longer. Let the artist strive as he will, he will not escape the conventional; he is running an impossible race. Broad harmonies of colour are hardly to be thought of; the gracious mystery of human emotion is out of all question—he must rely on whatever measure of elegant drawing he can include in his delineation of arms, neck, and thigh; and who in sheer beauty has a new word to say? Since Gainsborough and Ingres, all have failed to infuse new life into the worn-out theme. But cynicism was the great means of eloquence of the Middle Ages; and with cynicism Degas has rendered the nude an artistic possibility. Three coarse women, middle-aged and deformed by toil, are perhaps the most wonderful. One sponges herself in a tin bath; another passes a rough night-dress over her lumpy shoulders, and the touching ugliness of this poor human creature goes straight to the heart. ["And once," as Villon says, "we were such darlings!"] Then follows a long series conceived in the same spirit. A woman who has stepped out of a bath examines her arm. Degas says, 'La bête humaine qui s'occupe d'elle-même; une chatte qui se lèche.' Yes, it is the portrayal of the animal-life of the human being, the animal conscious of nothing but itself. 'Hitherto,' Degas says, as he shows his visitor three large peasant women plunging into a river, not to bathe but to wash or cool themselves (one drags a dog in after her), 'the nude has always been represented in poses which presuppose an audience, but these women of mine are honest, simple folk, unconcerned by any other interests than those involved in their physical condition. Here is another; she is washing her feet. It is as if you looked through a key-hole'." George Moore, *Impressions and Opinions,* 1913, "Degas," pp. 231-2.

But after all, isn't what may be seen through a key-hole about the least aesthetic of pictorial subject-matter?

themselves. Puvis de Chavannes paints with muted color forms that move in stately rhythm through a land of always-afternoon. The lotos-land of sense is depicted by A. B. Davies, with figures of Botticellian line and Maeterlinckian mystery; his hinted symbolism has the distraction of idea, yet tantalizes with intellectual fatuity. Ryder, mystical but sturdy, simplifies and synthesizes, frankly speaks in parable, yet sends his fated ship upon a palpable sea, builds a solid earth under lovers' feet. Sargent clothes patrician and parvenu alike with splendid and dashing color, yet somehow leaves their mean or complacent or reckless souls to shiver along the bleak shores of life. Maxfield Parrish, asking no place among the great, amazingly achieves the double end of illustrative decoration, as does Abbey in more dramatic fashion. Finally, one should record that the Russian painter, Nicholas Roerich, now exhibiting in America, has achieved the goal of many men's desire: his canvases are of the most moving sensuous beauty, yet full of meaning for those who must think. His are often story-telling pictures, yet their plot is wrought out in ravishing colors that make the figures forgotten. He has so fused subject with imagination, so simplified and synthesized material detail, so revealed *kokoro* through even cubistic forms—in short, so beautifully transcended actuality—as to offer us the æsthetically astounding.

Pictorial elements

To summarize, in our attempt to plumb a picture we should inquire whether color, drawing, or composition is the first concern. Color[1] will be felt as fresh or dull, rich or thin, of high or of low key. The various colors should be attuned or toned to the dominant note; light should be apportioned among them so as to secure proper values. Local colors found in nature are not to be rendered as the mind knows them, but as modified by light and atmosphere and adapted to the painter's purpose. Representation of reality is the natural aim of drawing,[2] yet line is a convention and as an aesthetic element should have a charm of its own, as in Botticelli and Ingres. Composition in two dimen-

For notes 1 and 2 see p. 395.

sions involves the principality of a dominant object, repetition of motifs, balance of masses, proportion. Structural or tridimensional composition should attain to tactile and movement values, yielding a sense as of construction out of solid substance and existence in a palpable though fluid medium, all parts related as in a living organism, not as in an assembled machine. The painter's brushwork will be seen as decisive or groping, delicate or energetic, graceful or broad. His personality will be revealed in every stroke, and in the whole conception. If representation is an evident purpose, as it must be in portraiture, the degree of success or failure in mirroring nature will be justly noted. But whether representative or not, the painting should prove fundamentally a rhythmic design in color delightful to every open eye.

[1]"Color, in art, is a subject not well understood as yet," is the somewhat astonishing admission of an artist-teacher, "and there are violent differences of opinion among artists, teachers, and critics, as to what constitutes good color-instruction." "Color, however complicated, may be reduced to three simple elements: Hue—as yellow, blue-green; Notan (or Value)—as dark red, light red; Intensity (or Bright-to-grayness)—as intense blue, dull blue. Color harmony depends upon adjustments in this three-fold nature. If a color scheme is discordant, the fault may be discovered in wrong selection of hues, or weak values, or ill-matched intensities, or all three." Arthur W. Dow, *Composition,* 1913, pp. 100-101.

Red, green, and violet-blue are now, continues Professor Dow, regarded as the primary colors, with yellow and purple as secondaries—five hues in all, making the basis of all color expression. The complementary or contrasting color for a primary is that obtained by combining the other two (the three totaling to white light). Thus on the larger five-color basis orange, made by combining red and yellow, would be the complementary of blue; and purple, from blue and red, the complementary of yellow, etc. Modern painters have made much of the discovery that in a picture a color surrounded by its complementary yields a new effect near the line of contact. Complementary colors side by side heighten each other; non-complementary colors thus placed diminish each other.

Colors have been found recently to have a peculiar psychological effect that is spoken of as movement, light colors seeming to approach the eye and dark colors to recede. Yellow masses appear to come toward one from the picture, blue or purple to withdraw. The Synchromists study to give to their forms and the shadows of them such hues as will keep them in the planes conceived or will evoke the physical and hence the psychological effects desired.

[2]"A form is badly drawn when it does not correspond with a part of an emotional conception," says Clive Bell (*Art,* pp. 232-4). "The shape of every form in a work of art should be imposed on the artist by his inspiration." Again: "No critic is so stupid as to mean by 'bad drawing,' drawing that does not represent the model correctly [except where the artist indicates

that representation is his purpose—and then Mr. Bell would say he might be a wax-figure maker, but not an artist]. The gods of the art schools, Michelangelo, Mantegna, Raffael, etc., played the oddest tricks with anatomy. Everyone knows that Giotto's figures are less accurately drawn than those of Sir Edward Poynter; no one supposes that they are not drawn better."

The skilful draughtsman is naturally inclined to realistic illustration. The modern Japanese are unbelievably expert in drawing and could easily accomplish deceiving realism. But they seek decorative value first; they conventionalize, and, though less than the ancient Chinese masters from whom they learned, they idealize.

DEFINITION OF ART

By DeWITT H. PARKER

Since it is our purpose to develop an adequate idea of art, it might seem as if a definition were rather our goal than our starting point; yet we must identify the field of our investigations and mark it off from other regions; and this we can do only by means of a preliminary definition, which the rest of our study may then enrich and complete.

A working definition of art

We shall find it fruitful to begin with the definition recently revived by Croce:[1] art is expression; and expression we may describe, for our own ends, as the putting forth of purpose, feeling, or thought into a sensuous medium, where they can be experienced again by the one who expresses himself and communicated to others. Thus, in this sense, a lyric poem is an expression—a bit of a poet's intimate experience put into words; epic and dramatic poetry are expressions—visions of a larger life made manifest in the same medium. Pictures and statues are also expressions; for they are embodiments in color and space-forms of the artists' ideas of visible nature and man. Works of architecture and the other industrial arts are embodiments of purpose and the well-being that comes from purpose fulfilled.

This definition, good as far as it goes, is, however, too inclusive; for plainly, although every work of art is an expression, not every expression is a work of art. Automatic expressions, instinctive overflowings of emotion into motor channels, like the cry of pain or the shout of joy, are not æsthetic. Practical expressions also, all such as are only

From *The Principles of Aesthetics,* by DeWitt H. Parker, 1920. By permission of and by special arrangement with Silver, Burdett and Company.

[1]Benedetto Croce: *Estetica,* translated into English by Douglas Ainslie, under title *Æsthetic,* chap. i.

[2]At the end of his next chapter Professor Parker reaches a corrected definition. "Art is expression, not of mere things or ideas, but of concrete experience with its values, and for its own sake. It is experience held in a delightful, highly organized sensuous medium, and objectified there for communication and reflection."—*Editor.*

means or instruments for the realization of ulterior purposes—the command of the officer, the conversation of the market place, a saw—are not æsthetic. Works of art—the *Ninth Symphony,* the *Ode to the West Wind*—are not of this character.

Works of art are ends in themselves

No matter what further purposes artistic expressions may serve, they are produced and valued for themselves; we linger in them; we neither merely execute them mechanically, as we do automatic expressions, nor hasten through them, our minds fixed upon some future end to be gained by them, as is the case with practical expressions. Both for the artist and the appreciator, they are ends in themselves. Compare, for example, a love poem with a declaration of love.[1] The poem is esteemed for the rhythmic emotional experience it gives the writer or reader; the declaration, even when enjoyed by the suitor, has its prime value in its consequences, and the quicker it is over and done with and its end attained the better. The one, since it has its purpose within itself, is returned to and repeated; the other, being chiefly a means to an end, would be senseless if repeated, once the end that called it forth is accomplished. The value of the love poem, although written to persuade a lady, cannot be measured in terms of its mere success; for if beautiful, it remains of worth after the lady has yielded, nay, even if it fails to win her. Any sort of practical purpose may be one motive in the creation of a work of art, but its significance is broader than the success or failure of that motive. The Russian novel is still significant, even now, after the revolution. As beautiful, it is of perennial worth and stands out by itself. But practical expressions are only transient links in the endless chain of means, disappearing as the wheel of effort revolves. Art is indeed expression, but free or autonomous expression.

Expression in general

The freedom of æsthetic expression is, however, only an intensification of a quality that may belong to any expression. For, in its native charac-

[1]Contrast Croce's use of the same illustration: *Æsthetic*, p. 22, English translation.

ter, expression is never merely practical; it brings its own reward in the pleasure of the activity itself. Ordinarily, when a man makes something embodying his need or fancy, or says something that expresses his meaning, he enjoys himself in his doing. There is naturally a generous superfluity in all human behavior. The economizing of it to what is necessary for self-preservation and dominion over the environment is secondary, not primary, imposed under the duress of competition and nature. Only when activities are difficult or their fruits hard to get are they disciplined for the sake of their results alone; then only does their performance become an imperative, and nature and society impose upon them the seriousness and constraint of necessity and law. But whenever nature and the social organization supply the needs of man ungrudgingly or grant him a respite from the urgency of business, the spontaneity of his activities returns. The doings of children, of the rich, and of all men on a holiday illustrate this. Compare, for example, the speech of trade, where one says the brief and needful thing only, with the talk of excursionists, where verbal expression, having no end beyond itself, develops at length and at leisure; where brevity is no virtue and abundant play takes the place of a narrow seriousness.

But we have not yet so limited the field of expression that it becomes equivalent to the æsthetic; for not even all of free expression is art. The most important divergent type is science. Science also is expression,—an embodiment in words, diagrams, mathematical symbols, chemical formulæ, or other such media, of thoughts meant to portray the objects of human experience. Scientific expressions have, of course, a practical function; concepts are "plans of action" or servants of plans, the most perfect and delicate that man possesses. Yet scientific knowledge is an end in itself as well as a utility; for the mere construction and possession of concepts and laws is itself a source of joy; the man of science delights in making appropriate formulations of nature's habits quite unconcerned about their possible uses.

In science, therefore, there is much free expression; but beauty not yet. No abstract expression such as Euclid's *Elements,* Newton's *Principia,* or Peano's *Formulaire,* no matter how rigorous and complete, is a work of art. We admire the mathematician's formula for its simplicity and adequacy; we take delight in its clarity and scope, in the ease with which it enables the mind to master a thousand more special truths, but we do not find it beautiful. Equally removed from the sphere of the beautiful are representations or descriptions of mere things, whether inaccurate or haphazard, as we make them in daily life, or accurate and careful as they are elaborated in the empirical sciences. No matter how exact and complete, the botanist's or zoölogist's descriptions of plant and animal life are not works of art. They may be satisfactory as knowledge, but they are not beautiful. There is an important difference between a poet's description of a flower and a botanist's, or between an artistic sketch and a woodcut, conferring beauty upon the former, and withholding it from the latter.

Aesthetic expression

The central difference is this. The former are descriptions not of things only, but of the artist's reactions to things, his mood or emotion in their presence. They are expressions of total, concrete experiences, which include the self of the observer as well as the things he observes. Scientific descriptions, on the other hand, render objects only; the feelings of the observer toward them are carefully excluded. Science is intentionally objective,—from the point of view of the artistic temperament, dry and cold. Even the realistic novel and play, while seeking to present a faithful picture of human life and to eliminate all private comment and emotion, cannot dispense with the elementary dramatic feelings of sympathy, suspense, and wonder. Æsthetic expression is always integral, embodying a total state of mind, the core of which is some feeling; scientific expression is fragmentary or abstract, limiting itself to thought. Art, no less than science, may contain truthful images of things and abstract ideas, but never these alone; it always includes

their life, their feeling tones, or values. Because philosophy admits this element of personality, it is nearer to art than science is. Yet some men of science, like James and Huxley, have made literature out of science because they could not help putting into their writings something of their passionate interest in the things they discovered and described.

Expression of value or human significance

The necessity in art for the expression of value is, I think, the principal difference between art and science, rather than, as Croce[1] supposes, the limitation of art to the expression of the individual and of science to the expression of the concept. For, on the one hand, science may express the individual; and, on the other hand, art may express the concept. The geographer, for example, describes and makes maps of particular regions of the earth's surface; the astronomer studies the individual sun and moon. Poets like Dante, Lucretius, Shakespeare, and Goethe express the most universal concepts of ethics or metaphysics. But what makes men poets rather than men of science is precisely that they never limit themselves to the mere clear statement of the concept, but always express its human significance as well. A theory of human destiny is expressed in Prospero's lines—

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep;

but with overtones of feeling at the core. Or consider the passion with which Lucretius argues for a naturalistic conception of the universe. And the reason why poets clothe their philosophical expressions in concrete images is not because of any shame of the concept, but just in order the more easily and vividly to attach and communicate their emotion. Their general preference for the concrete has the same motive; for there are only a few abstractions capable of arousing and fixing emotion.

[1] *Estetica,* quarta edizione, p. 27; English translation, p. 36.

Expression of personal emotion

Even as an element of spontaneity is native to all expression, so originally all expression is personal. This is easily observable in the child. His first uses of words as well as of things are touched with emotion. Every descriptive name conveys to him his emotional reaction to the object; disinterested knowledge does not exist for him; every tool, a knife, or a fork, means to him not only something to be used, but the whole background of feelings which its use involves. Our first perceptions of things contain as much of feeling and attitude as of color and shape and sound and odor. Pure science and mere industry are abstractions from the original integrity of perception and expression; mutilations of their wholeness forced upon the mind through the stress of living. To be able to see things without feeling them, or to describe them without being moved by their image, is a disciplined and derivative accomplishment. Only as the result of training and of haste do the forms and colors of objects, once the stimuli to a wondering and lingering attention, become mere cues to their recognition and employment, or mere incitements to a cold and disinterested analysis and description. Knowledge may therefore enter into beauty when, keeping its liberality, it participates in an emotional experience; and every other type of expression may become æsthetic if, retaining its native spontaneity, it can acquire anew its old power to move the heart. To be an artist means to be, like the child, free and sensitive in envisaging the world.

The beauty of nature

Under these conditions, nature as well as art may be beautiful. In themselves, things are never beautiful. This is not apparent to common sense because it fails to think and analyze. But beauty may belong to our *perceptions* of things. For perception is itself a kind of expression, a process of mind through which meanings are embodied in sensations. Given are only sensations, but out of the mind come ideas through which they are interpreted as objects. When, for example, I perceive my friend, it may seem as if the man himself were a given object which I passively receive; but, as a matter of fact, all that is given are

certain visual sensations; that these are my friend, is pure interpretation—I construct the object in embodying this thought in the color and shape I see. The elaboration of sensation in perception is usually so rapid that, apart from reflection, I do not realize the mental activity involved. But if it turns out that it was some other man that I saw, then I realize at once that my perception was a work of mind, an expression of my own thought. Of course, not all perceptions are beautiful. Only as felt to be mysterious or tender or majestic is a landscape beautiful; and women only as possessed of the charm we feel in their presence. That is, perceptions are beautiful only when they embody feelings. The sea, clouds and hills, men and women, as perceived, awaken reactions which, instead of being attributed to the mind from which they proceed, are experienced as belonging to the things evoking them, which therefore come to embody them. And this process of emotional and objectifying perception has clearly no other end than just perception itself. We do not gaze upon a landscape or a pretty child for any other purpose than to get the perceptual, emotional values that result. The æsthetic perception of nature is, as Kant called it, disinterested; that is, autonomous and free. The beauty of nature, therefore, is an illustration of our definition.

On the same terms, life as remembered or observed or lived, may have the quality of beauty. In reverie we turn our attention back over events in our own lives that have had for us a rare emotional significance; these events then come to embody the wonder, the interest, the charm that excited us to recollect them. Here the activity of remembering is not a mere habit set going by some train of accidental association; or merely practical, arising for the sake of solving some present problem by applying the lesson of the past to it; or finally, not unpleasantly insistent, like the images aroused by worry and sorrow, but spontaneous and self-rewarding, hence beautiful. There are also events in the lives of other people, and people themselves, whose lives read like a story, which, by absorbing our pity or joy or awe claim from us a like fascinated regard. And there are actions we ourselves perform,

magnificent or humble, like sweeping a room, which, if we put ourselves into them and enjoy them, have an equal charm. And they too have the quality of beauty.

Diverse beauty of nature and art

Despite the community between beautiful nature and art, the differences are striking. Suppose, in order to fix our ideas, we compare one of Monet's pictures of a lily pond with the æsthetic appreciation of the real pond. The pond is undoubtedly beautiful every time it is seen; with its round outline, its sunlit, flower-covered surface, its background of foliage, it is perhaps the source and expression of an unfailing gladness and repose. Now the painting has very much the same value, but with these essential differences. First, the painting is something deliberately constructed and composed, the artist himself controlling and composing the colors and shapes, and hence their values also; while the natural beauty is an immediate reaction to given stimuli, each observer giving meaning to his sensations without intention or effort. Like the beauty of a woman, it is almost a matter of instinct. In natural beauty, there is, to be sure, an element of conscious intention, in so far as we may purposely select our point of view and hold the object in our attention; hence this contrast with art, although real and important, is not absolute. Moreover, beauty in perception and memory is the basis of art; the artist, while he composes, nevertheless partly transcribes significant memories and observations. Yet, although relative, the difference remains; art always consists of *works* of art, natural beauty of more immediate experiences. And from this difference follows another—the greater purity and perfection of art. The control which the artist exerts over his material enables him to make it expressive all through; every element conspires toward the artistic end; there are no irrelevant or recalcitrant parts, such as exist in every perception of nature. Last, the beauty of the painting, because created in the beholder through a fixed and permanent mechanism constructed by the artist, is communicable and abiding, whereas the immediate beauty of nature is incommunicable and transient. Since the æsthetic perception of nature has its starting

point in variable aspects that never recur, no other man could see or feel the lily pond as Monet saw and felt it. And, although in memory we may possess a silent gallery of beautiful images, into which we may enter privately as long as we live, in the end the flux has its way and at death shatters this treasure house irrevocably. Hence, only if the beauty of the lily pond is transferred to a canvas, can it be preserved and shared.

The aesthetic life

The work of art is the tool of the æsthetic life. Just as organic efficiency is tied to the nerve and muscle of the workman and cannot be transferred to another, but the tool, on the other hand, is exchangeable and transmissible (I cannot lend or bequeath my arm, but I can my boat); and just as efficiency is vastly increased by the use of tools (I can go further with my boat than I can swim); so, through works of art, æsthetic capacity and experience are enhanced and become common possessions, a part of the spiritual capital of the race. Moreover, even as each invention becomes the starting point for new ones that are better instruments for practical ends; so each work of art becomes the basis for new experiments through which the æsthetic expression of life attains to higher levels. Monet's own art, despite its great originality, was dependent upon all the impressionists, and they, even when they broke away from, were indebted to the traditions of French painting established by centuries. Through art, the æsthetic life, which otherwise would be a private affair, receives a social sanction and assistance.

Art and communication

That permanence and communication of expression are essential to a complete conception of art can be discerned by looking within the artistic impulse itself. However much the artist may affect indifference to the public, he creates expecting to be understood. Mere self-expression does not satisfy him; he needs in addition appreciation. Deprived of sympathy, the artistic impulse withers and dies or supports itself through the hope of eventually finding it. The heroism of the poet consists in working on in loneliness; but his crown of glory is won only when all men are

singing his songs. And every genuine artist as opposed to the mere improviser or dilettante, wishes his work to endure.[1] Having put his substance into it, he desires its preservation as he does his own. His immortality through it is his boast.

Exegi monumentum aere perennius
Regalique situ pyramidum altius
* * * * *
Non omnis moriar.

Art is not mere inspiration, the transient expression of private moods, but a work of communication, meant to endure.

The sensuous medium

There are certain distinguishing characteristics of æsthetic expression, all of which are in harmony with the description we have given of it. In the first place, in art the sensuous medium of the expression receives an attention and possesses a significance not to be found in other types of expression. Although every one hears, no one attends to the sound of the voice in ordinary conversation; one looks through it, as through a glass, to the thought or emotion behind. In our routine perceptions of nature, we are not interested in colors and shapes on their own account, but only in order that we may recognize the objects possessing them; in a scientific woodcut also, they are indifferent to us, except in so far as they impart correct information about the objects portrayed. Outside of art, sensation is a mere transparent means to the end of communication and recognition. Compare the poem, the piece of music, the artistic drawing or painting. There the words or tones must be not only heard but listened to; the colors and lines not only seen but held in the eye; of themselves, apart from anything they may further mean, they have the power to awaken feeling and pleasure. And this is no accident. For the æsthetic expression is meant to possess worth in itself and is deliberately fashioned to hold us to itself, and this purpose will be more certainly and effectively accomplished if the

[1] See Anatole France: *Le Lys Rouge.* "Moi, dit Choulette, je pense si peu à l'avenir terrestre qui j'ai écrit mes plus beaux poèmes sur les feuilles de papier à cigarettes. Elles se sont facilement évanuies, ne laissant à mes vers qu'une espèce d'existence métaphysique." C'était un air de négligence qu'il se donnait. En fait, il n'avait jamais perdu une ligne de son écriture.

medium of the expression has the power to move and please. We enter the æsthetic expression through the sensuous medium; hence the artist tries to charm us at the start and on the outside; having found favor there, he wins us the more easily to the content lying within.

If the medium, moreover, instead of being a transparent embodiment of the artist's feelings, can express them in some direct fashion as well, the power of the whole expression will gain. This is exactly what the sound of the words of a poem or the colors and lines of a painting or statue can do. As mere sound and as mere color and line, they convey something of the feeling tone of the subject which, as symbols, they are used to represent. For example, the flowing lines of Correggio, quite apart form the objects they represent, express the voluptuous happiness of his "Venus and Mars"; the slow rhythm of the repeated word sounds and the quality of the vowels in the opening lines of *Tithonus* are expressive in themselves, apart from their meaning, of the weariness in the thoughts of the hero, and so serve to reëxpress and enforce the mood of those thoughts. When we come to study the particular arts, we shall find this phenomenon of reëxpression through the medium everywhere.

A second characteristic distinguishing æsthetic expressions from other expressions is their superior unity. **Artistic unity** In the latter, the unity lies in the purpose to be attained or in the content of the thought expressed; it is teleological or logical. The unity of a chair is its purpose, which demands just such parts and in just such a mechanical arrangement; the unity of a business conversation is governed by the bargain to be closed, requiring such words and such only, and in the appropriate logical and grammatical order. The unity of an argument is the thesis to be proved; the unity of a diagram is the principle to be illustrated or the information to be imparted. Compare the unity of a sonnet or a painting. In a sonnet there is a unity of thought and sentiment creating a fitting grammatical unity in language, but in addition a highly elaborate pattern in the words themselves that is neither grammatical nor logical. In a painting, besides the

dramatic unity of the action portrayed, as in a battle scene; or of the spatial and mechanical togetherness of things, as in a landscape; there is a harmony of the colors, a composition of the lines and masses themselves, not to be found in nature. And, although the general shape and arrangement of the parts of a useful object is dominated by its purpose, if it is also beautiful—a Louis Seize chair, for example—there is, besides, a design that cannot be explained by use. In artistic expressions, therefore, there exists a unity in the material, superposed upon the unity required by the purpose or thought expressed. And this property follows from the preceding. For, since the medium is valuable in itself, the mind, which craves unity everywhere, craves it there also, and lingers longer and more happily on finding it; and, since the medium can be expressive, the unity of the fundamental mood of the thought expressed will overflow into and pervade it. Hence there occurs an autonomous development of unity in the material, raising the total unity of the expression to a higher power.

THE AESTHETIC ATTITUDE

By HERBERT SIDNEY LANGFELD

It is now in place, before proceeding further with the factors of [psychical] distance, to explain more fully the nature of the aesthetic attitude, and it will then be more clearly seen what place distance has in such an attitude, for it is not entirely clear from Dr. Bullough's own description.[1] When one views an object aesthetically, one lives in the object in the sense that one allows oneself to be entirely swayed by the laws of the object without any opposition upon one's own part. It is a very active participation, and the term "passive" can be used only in the sense that one allows oneself to be led. What is added through the imagination is prescribed by the totality of the object, and one's adjustments are shaped accordingly, the

Participation in the beautiful object

From chapter 3 of *The Aesthetic Attitude,* Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1920, by special arrangement with the publishers. The author is a professor of psychology in Harvard University.

[1] "Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," *British Journal of Psychology,* vol. 5, pp. 87-118.

Professor Langfeld explains: "The term 'distance' is used metaphorically and not in the sense of spatial or temporal separation. It may for that reason be misleading to some readers, and further, the phrase 'psychical distance' has an unfortunately mystical connotation. In one place, Dr. Bullough uses the term 'detachment' . . . Let it be supposed that an individual is on a ship during a storm, and there is serious danger of shipwreck. It is quite possible that even in such a situation, a man of artistic temperament would admire the movements of the waves, and the dash of the spray, entirely oblivious of danger, and with no concern as to what the high seas may ultimately do to the ship. Descriptions of such a state of mind, even in situations of extreme danger, are frequently found in literature. For Dr. Bullough there would here be complete psychical distance. Suddenly, however, a wave larger than any previous one approaches and the artist's muscles set in preparation to meet the blow. Dr. Bullough would say that at that instant he has entirely lost his distance, that is, his aesthetic attitude. It will now be better understood why Dr. Bullough has termed the distance 'psychical,' for it denotes the mental attitude." (*The Aesthetic Attitude,* pp. 57-58.)

In Masefield's narrative poem *Dauber,* the pitiful-heroic landsman who dreads the sea but loves it and desires above all things to paint its very nature, endures long tortures from brutish sailors and appalling waters in an effort to achieve the 'psychical distance' that shall make him the revealing artist of his chosen subject. And when his soul has conquered fear, he dies—not an artist, but a sailor.—*Editor.*

object being allowed in all ways to dictate the manner of such adjustment. The aesthetic attitude may be likened to rowing downstream with the current and following all of its windings. One is here active in that one moves with the stream, but passive in that one opposes no resistance to the force which is carrying one on. The attitude is lost when one attempts to push upstream or off on the side eddy of one's choice. One is reminded of an illustration by Fidus of children in a boat paddling with the stream who think they are pushing while in reality they are drifting with the current.

Yielding to the drama

What is meant is best shown by the attitude at the drama. Here one follows and lives the acts of each of the players as the plot unfolds, instead of identifying oneself with one actor and, in the eagerness to meet the developing situation, anticipating events contrary to the central idea of the author. In the truly aesthetic participation, one is swayed back and forth by the conflicting forces. One is successively hero, villain, and clown. One awaits the attack with the actor, and does not advance to meet it otherwise than as depicted. If the scene involves the ringing of the church bell, one does not, in one's imagination, stroll toward the church, unless there are indications that it is intended that one should. It may be objected that one frequently allows one's imagination to wander from the plot and to build a plot of one's own. That is true, but then, for the moment, one becomes playwright instead of audience. The artist is bound as well as the audience. He is bound by his own unified plan and so long as he keeps within it, he too is a servant of the characters and walks and talks with them all.

Personal involvement

The man who lost his distance at the play of *Othello* by imagining his wife in the place of Desdemona ceased to feel the total conflict in that he became identified with Othello alone and no longer lived in the lines of the playwright. By that act the aesthetic attitude was lost. Actors have often felt flattered by effects upon their audience which were totally unaesthetic. A famous actor delighted to recount an incident which occurred while he was playing *The Middleman.* He was a poor inventor who had

used up his last resources and could not obtain sufficient fuel to keep up the furnace fire in which the pottery was being hardened. Only a few moments more and his fortune would have been made. Moved by the excitement of the scene, a man in the gallery threw down fifty cents, shouting, "Here, old man, buy wood with it." This active participation was proof of the realism of the scene, but an actor with ideals of his art would scarcely care to act before an audience composed entirely of such individuals. Such an attitude as that just described is typical of the melodrama where the audience frequently hisses the villain and applauds the hero when it is not warning him of approaching danger; truly an attitude which is highly enjoyable to those concerned. Such participation can, however, scarcely be termed aesthetic, for it is opposing oneself to the tendencies and motives of the play.

Another actor has described the fright of one of the musicians in the orchestra when the actor rushed down the stage toward him in one of his most dramatic scenes. The musician never became accustomed to this scene. Night after night he started back in terror before the onrush of the actor. So pleased was the latter that at the end of the engagement he presented the musician with a box of cigars. It would be difficult for anyone in the musician's position to have retained his aesthetic outlook, to have been so occupied by the plot and acting that he would have followed the actor in thought instead of retreating before him; but if that was also the effect upon the rest of the audience, the play could not be considered a success so far as beauty is concerned.

Even applause at critical points of the acting, so annoying to the lover of dramatic art, although an indication of appreciation, is also proof that the audience has for the time lost its distance and slipped away from the purely asthetic. As an example from the appreciation of nature, one may stand upon the shore in deep enjoyment of the "cold gray mist and the dawn," one may be enchanted by the lines of the waves, the soft spray of the foaming waters as it slides up the smooth beach, one may feel the movement of the water and the lines of the beach

Yielding to natural beauty

as it inclines to meet it, and the unity of the total situation. One may become so absorbed in the harmony of lines and color that one is entirely oblivious of the fact that water has touched one's shoes. It is obvious that when one retreats before the waves one loses one's distance, that the water is no longer a thing of beauty, but a force that is compelling one to withdraw. It cannot be said that the loss of aesthetic attitude is due to the intrusion of the thought of self into consciousness, and for that reason one ceases to "repose" in the object, for one's flight may be so nearly reflex and instantaneous that there is no place or time for self-consciousness. It might be asked whether in the backward movement one were not still living in the scene. To this one may reply that the movements would not be according to any requirement of the scene itself, and they would not be a part of or harmonize with the picture that has been before one as an object of aesthetic enjoyment.

One may enjoy the tone of the bugle call aesthetically and retain one's distance by the contemplation of fundamental tone and overtones. One's usual attitude, however, is a non-aesthetic one; the sound starts a movement the manner of which is in no way prescribed by the sound itself, nor in harmony with it. A group of individuals hearing it will all understand its meaning, but the variations in response may be as great as the number of individuals and the enjoyment may be either in the sound itself, in the manner of response, or in the union of the two.

Effects of sculpture

In entering an art gallery one comes suddenly upon a Greek statue with outstretched hand. There may be an involuntary tendency to put out one's hand under a misapprehension that the statue invites it, but the manner of stretching one's own hand is not indicated by the statue, and there can therefore be no question of the harmony of this movement with the movements as indicated by the lines of the figure. This first surprised attitude, then, is non-aesthetic and in sharp contrast with the attitude assumed when enjoying the beauty of the statue. There is also in this latter attitude the tendency to stretch the arm, but it is in order to feel the full

value of the lines of the statue. It is an extension of the arm with the arm of the statue and not toward it, and thus a movement in harmony with the rest of the statue as intended by the sculptor. A full description of the nature of this participation or empathy[1] is not in question here, but will be discussed in the following chapter. The intention here is merely to make clear the general distinction between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic activities of the observer.

The natural attitude toward environment

The aesthetic attitude as thus described is diametrically opposed to one's usual attitude toward one's environment, the one which one learns to assume by reason of the struggle for existence. In this latter attitude, we are continually opposing forces. Our organism becomes set or adjusted to meet and overcome obstacles, while, as has been stated above, the aesthetic set is directed toward experiencing in ourselves the various relations which the elements of the objejct have to one another and not our own independent action in regard to them. Biologically it is the more independent action which is of significance and interest, and for this reason it is for most of us the habitual mode of response. The aesthetic attitude, on the other hand, is not only more unusual, but one that for most individuals has to be cultivated if it is to exist at all in the midst of the opposing and therefore disturbing influences which are always present. We are accustomed to put out our hand in greeting, to retreat from advancing waves, and to brace ourselves against attack. The man who does not seem to have this attitude is considered somewhat abnormal, and the artist who has developed the contrary mode of response belongs to the type so frequently called erratic. If the word

[1]In chapter 5, Professor Langfeld discusses the theory of *Einfühlung* developed by Theodor Lipps and others. *Empathy* is the alternative term used by E. B. Titchener in his *Experimental Psychology of the Thought Processes.* In contemplating a Grecian column or a Gothic arch, we feel the force that lifts and rounds it; in gazing at a painted tree or waterfall or human form we share its dynamic quality and live its life. We read ourselves into the artistic creation, making it more than material, and yet reflect in our very physical states the material expressions of its supposedly spiritual being. The tactual and movement values demanded of the sculptor and the painter are felt by empathy.

"detachment" is understood to mean this latter attitude, then the term may be legitimately used to describe the artistic state of mind.

Unreality in aesthetic experience

It is possible to explain the feeling of unreality which is present in aesthetic experience in terms of that adjustment of the organism which is characteristic of the aesthetic attitude. When we react to the world with our habitual mode of response, things seem real. When there is a derangement, we experience a feeling of unreality, which can become pathological in its extreme form. In certain nervous diseases, there is, through a disorder in the sympathetic nervous system, an absence of the usual emotional response. For example, if there is news of the death of an intimate friend, full meaning of the message is grasped intellectually by the one suffering from such a nervous disorder, but there is an absence of the accustomed emotion. The eyes remain dry, the heart fails to beat more irregularly, and the patient complains that there is a strong sense of unreality, as would be the case if he were witnessing a drama instead of living an experience which is of vital importance to him. Familiar objects no longer call up emotional responses. In fact, the whole world is viewed with indifference. This is what is known as an estrangement from the world of reality. Soldiers have frequently stated that while on the front line, it seemed to them as though they were witnessing a play, that life under shell fire was like a well-staged drama, although they were actually participating in the most vital events that ever involved civilization. The explanation of this experience, and it has been too often corroborated to be doubted, seems to be in the unaccustomed responses that are made. The soldiers have been meeting conditions that they have never had to face before, perhaps not even in their most uncontrolled imaginings, and they must develop a new, and unaccustomed set of adjustments. Their manner of thought changes; generally in the direction of a doctrine of fatalism which they embrace in order to maintain their mental balance. Not only that, but their emotions have been so often and strongly aroused that they become almost indifferent to the most harrowing scenes, to

horrors that in their ordinary life as peaceful civilians would have overpowered them. Their state is very similar to the pathological one just described, and a remark that is frequently heard is that "It is all so strange that I can hardly believe it is real."

The aesthetic attitude (being a non-resisting one) is not, as previously stated, such an adjustment as is ordinarily assumed toward the environment. There is a different motor set, and for that reason there is present in appreciation a feeling of make-believe which has given rise to an identification that is so frequently made between art and play. It is not meant that this sense of unreality is vividly in consciousness in aesthetic contemplation. It is no more strongly represented than is the feeling of familiarity toward our own clothes or our accustomed haunts. We are usually fully conscious of our familiar surroundings only when some aspect of them has been changed.

It is this unreality which Professor Konrad Lange has termed "illusion," and which he has made the criterion of art, without, however, searching for its deeper significance. He writes, "We conclude. . . . . that aesthetic enjoyment which a work of art as work of art affords is dependent neither upon the quality of its content nor upon its formal nature, but that it rests entirely upon the strength and vividness of the illusion to which the artist brings us through his art."[1] To Professor Lange, who is concerned only with art and not with beauty in nature, that may have seemed a sufficient definition, but it is not adequate and it entirely fails to explain the aesthetic enjoyment of natural beauty. A knowledge of the psychology of the attitude is first required, and an understanding of the sense of illusion follows. The characteristics of the art object as such are not the only factors of illusion. There will be no sense of illusion in witnessing a play, even though it has all the qualities that are usually favorable to illusion, if we slip from the aesthetic attitude.

Illusion in art

[1] *Das Wesen der Kunst*, p. 81.

Realism and unreality

The question of realism in art has caused much difficulty because it involves ideas that have appeared hard to reconcile. The dramatic critic asks for "real" situations and "real" incidents. He objects to a play that seems artificial, that does not correspond to life, yet we have said that a truly aesthetic enjoyment demands a sense of unreality. The seeming contradiction is readily explained by the fact that the object may be as real in the sense of true to life, as is consistent with the intent of the artist, but the attitude of the observer should be different from that generally assumed toward the world. If we are able to maintain an aesthetic attitude, the most stirringly real play will continue to be a play for us, and the most ultra-realistic picture will continue to be a work of art, and the most life-like statue will remain for us a series of graceful lines in marble; that is, we shall have maintained our distance, and the object will have remained an object of beauty.

Appeal to personal desires

If we are to live passively in the object of art, must our own personality be entirely suppressed? Are we to enjoy the unity of plot or the grace of line only in an entirely abstract manner, so distant from the content that we are entirely indifferent to it? Must all art have as formal an appeal as that of most musical compositions or symphonies of color in fine art? Should art have no human appeal? Without further explanation, such conclusions might be drawn from what has been said, but notwithstanding the efforts of some artists and critics, the history of aesthetic appreciation and the evidence of the present day point to the fact that the art if it is to last must be a warm, living art, made for human beings and not intellectual machines, appealing not only through the formal arrangement but through the subject-matter, that is, through the content or meaning of such arrangement.

Personality and wish

Every individual has within him the possibility of definite modes of response which constitute his personality. In the unconscious, or as some would say the sub-conscious, are what may be called suppressed complexes. A complex involves "wishes" according to Dr. E. B.

Holt, who thus describes the latter term: "This 'wish,' which as a concept Freud does not analyze, includes all that would commonly be so classed, and also whatever would be called impulse, tendency, desire, purpose, attitude, and the like; not including, however, any emotional components thereof. . . An exact definition of the 'wish' is that it is *a course of action* which some mechanism of the body is *set* to carry out, whether it actually does so or does not. . . . We shall do well if we consider this wish to be, as in fact it is, dependent on a *motor attitude* of the physical body, which goes over into overt action and *conduct* when the wish is carried into execution."[1] Our acts, even those which seem most trivial, are to some extent controlled by our unconscious desires, hopes and impulses, although we are for the most part unaware of the true motives. At times we are dimly conscious of the true reason for our acts. At other times it may be of such a nature that we do not care to acknowledge it even to ourselves. We therefore rationalize our acts, in our own minds, thus deceiving ourselves, as, for example, when we refuse to contribute to charity because, as we tell our conscience, we do not quite approve of some of the methods of the organization, the true reason being, and we are aware of the fact in the dim recesses of our minds, that we do not care to spend the money. Now to appeal to such unconscious desires is to gain our interest, and the more fundamental the desire, the stronger will be the appeal.

It may be objected, however, that the above facts are in contradiction to the previous statement that we must live in the object of appreciation, allowing ourselves to be passively swayed hither and thither by it. How can we give ourselves up so completely and still fulfil our own desires? The answer is to be found in the fact that the work of art must be of such a nature that we can find expression for our wishes in it. Not only should the work of art touch our wishes and in that way interest us, but it must provide the means for the complete fulfillment of the wish within the object itself, if it is to remain art for the observer.

Wish realized in art

[1] *The Freudian Wish*, pp. 3-4.

Undoubtedly some of the pleasure in art form is due to the fact that we can realize in a world of unreality wishes and impulses that we otherwise should not desire to express or for whose realization the opportunity would never be offered. The wish is released and the sense of unreality relieves us of the necessity of rationalization. The stage probably makes the strongest appeal to these underlying wishes, and it is here that the mechanism just described is most readily recognized, but it applies in greater or less degree to all forms of art, no matter how formal. Even in the enjoyment of the rhythm of lines unconscious impulses are involved which give meaning to the experience. Art for art's sake, if by the phrase is meant that art should be independent of all content, is an abstract rule that is made impossible by the very nature of mind.

It will now be more clearly understood why such terms as "detachment" and "disinterested contemplation" may be misleading. Far from requiring an inhibition of all play of our personality such as exists in an hypnotic trance, we demand and are able to obtain in art the widest scope for the harmless play of those complex systems of impulses which the psychologists believe to constitute the ego.

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AESTHETIC EMBODIMENTS

By BERNARD BOSANQUET

I will repeat myself so far as to give an example which I gave many years ago, and in which I admit that I take great enjoyment. It is—I am shamelessly quoting from myself—perhaps the earliest aesthetic judgment which Western literature contains. It is in the Homeric description of the metal-working deity's craftsmanship in the shield of Achilles. He has made upon it the representation of a deep fallow field with the ploughmen driving their furrows on it; and the poet observes, "And behind the plough the earth went black, and looked like ploughed ground, though it was made of gold; that was a very miracle of his craft."

The shield of Achilles

Now what was the miracle here, that made Homer cry out at it with delight? It was not, surely, that when you have one bit of ploughed land you can make another like it. That goes on all day when a man ploughs a field. Or what made Dante say of the sculptures on the marble of Purgatory, that one who saw the reality would see no better than he did, and that the representation of some smoke set his eyes and nose at variance as to whether it was real?

Surely the miracle lies in what Homer accents when he says, "Though it was made of gold." It lies here; that without the heavy matter and whole natural process of the reality, man's mind possesses a magic by which it can extract the soul of the actual thing or event, and confer it on any medium which is convenient to him, the wall of a cave, or a plate of gold, or a scrap of paper. And when these great poets insist on the likeness of the imitation, I take it that the real underlying interest is in the conquest of the difference of the medium. So that really, in the

Extracting the soul of a thing

From *Three Lectures on Aesthetic,* by Bernard Bosanquet, 1915. The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.

Professor Bosanquet is a widely known English scholar in philosophy and aesthetics. His *History of Aesthetic* was published by the Macmillan Company in 1904..

naïve praise of successful imitation, we have, if we read it rightly, the germ of the fundamental doctrine of aesthetic semblance. That is to say, what matters is not the thing, but the appearance which you can carry off, and deal with apart from it, and recreate. And the real sting of even the crudest glorification of copying is this wonder that you can carry off with you a thing's soul, and leave its body behind. It is quite natural to misconceive this miracle as if the merit lay in making the soul as near as possible a replica of the body. But if you treat the soul as the body at its very best, that is not a bad analogy for the problem of representation in dealing with the aesthetic semblance. See how pregnant this praise of copying is. Dante, in the same passage, says that the carvings put to shame "not only Polycleitus, but Nature herself." It is the spirit of Whistler's "Nature's creeping up." You can copy a thing so splendidly that your copy will be more beautiful than the thing.

The value of representation

Thus we are prepared to understand the place and value of representation, which has always been something of a theoretical difficulty in aesthetic. It introduces *prima facie* an enormously larger and deeper world than the world of non-representative pattern-designing, to be the instrument of the embodiment of feeling. But the difficulty is that *qua* a mere world of fact, it has no capacity for *a priori* expression; and the use of it for expressive purposes, the imaginative use of fact, is therefore subject to innumerable dangers, arising from unaesthetic interests, which attach themselves to actual reality and therefore also to its imitative reproduction. Why multiply, for example, scenes and stories of wickedness? Is there not enough of it in the world already? If you are simply copying what you find, revealing in it no new depth or passion, the question is unanswerable.

Music is least representative and most expressive

I promised not to be historical; but I may mention it here as an extraordinary piece of insight on Aristotle's part, in which, essentially, he followed and summarised Plato, when he said that music was of all the arts the *most* imitative, meaning expressive, precisely on the ground that of all the arts it was the

least representative. Its expression, that is to say, approached most nearly to what we have ventured to call *a priori* expressiveness. Its rhythms and combinations went directly to the heart of emotion. They are, Aristotle says, *direct* resemblances of emotions, that is, without making the circuit of reference to anything which had a name and existence in the external world. I suppose this is in general the doctrine of musical expression accepted to-day.

The beauty of nature

In speaking of the place of representation in aesthetic experience, we have said all that is important on the aesthetic position of the love of natural beauty. For nature in its utmost range, including artificial things, and man as an external object, is just the region of all the things which can be objects of representative reproduction. The only thing that need be added is that by nature we mean, for aesthetic purposes, the fulness of the soul or semblance of external things, that which imaginative perception freely apprehends, and remodels in the interest of feeling. There is no reason to cut down our meaning to the attenuated constructions of physical science. They are not nature as it appears, and nature as it appears is what we love and admire. It is the living external world, as we *re*live it in our fullest imaginative experience.

It is well known that this, in its fulness, is a point of view which takes time to develop. "The charm of Nature," I believe, in the modern sense, is first mentioned by an Alexandrine poet of about the third century A.D. "In the house you have rest; out-of-doors the charm of nature."[1]

Views of nature

And as we saw, though this imaginative experience is not within actual reality, and is not to be interpreted as theoretical truth, yet it may make a difference to our general theory of things, and our theory may make a difference to it. And so, for example, representation of nature and imitation and idealisation are very different things according as we hold that nature has in it a life and divinity which it is attempting to reveal,—so that idealisation is the positive effort to bring to apprehension the deeper beauty we

[1] Mackail, *Select Epigrams*, p. 278.

feel to be there,—or as we hold that nature is at bottom a dead mechanical system, and idealisation therefore lies in some way of treating it which weakens or generalises its effect and makes it less and not more of what its fullest character would be. No doubt, theory seeking for truth does not accept imaginative expressions as logical conclusions, but it is bound to take account of the fact that imagination finds in experience the instrument of that immense embodiment of feeling which it constructs. Aesthetic imagination and logical theory are co-ordinate powers. Neither can do the work of the other. But both reveal something to us in their own way.

Imagination has its truth

We have seen that what we may call pure or *a priori* expression is not merely the simplest and primary character of aesthetic embodiment,[1] but recurs also at what is almost the climax of aesthetic achievement, that is, in the art of music. This leads us to observe how capriciously, as it would seem, this principle of representation asserts itself in the hierarchy of the arts. In architecture it is present hardly at all; in sculpture and painting it is predominant; in music, it has hardly any place as of right, or a very subordinate one; in poetry, it reasserts itself with almost predominant power. There seems to be in some degree a struggle between the two sides of the aesthetic attitude, the side of direct expression through rhythm and sensuous combinations, and the side which, though its contribution to expression is indirect, yet brings with it in the end the whole resources of the imaginable universe. As we saw, if we consider the problem accurately, it is impossible to dispense with either factor, and they have indeed no aesthetic existence apart. Yet the idea for example that in music we have the pure type of expressiveness, that towards which every art is bound to aspire, does appear to indicate an inherent impulse of the art-spirit towards a mode of utterance which is not loaded with the

Representation in the various arts

[1] In the first part of this lecture on "The Aesthetic Attitude in its Embodiments" Bosanquet speaks of simple patterns such as square and cube, simple melodies, simple rhythms, and the pulsations of the dance as obvious or a *priori* embodiments of simple feelings, of the aesthetic spirit.—*Editor.*

weight of representation.[1] We have only to say, that we have attempted to display the necessary root of this apparent conflict, and to explain how the representative factor, while having no independent justification, is nevertheless essential, in its place, to the full development of the aesthetic attitude.

Patterns in drama

After all, we can relive the character and conflicts of man, as we express them for instance in the drama, with a necessity which not only covers a wider and deeper world, but which also is more unmistakable and precise in its sequences, than the simple language of rhythm or the decorative pattern. For the mind of man is open to us as the extension of our own, and has its own necessity, which weaves its great patterns on the face of the whole world. And in these patterns—the patterns of life itself—the fullest feeling finds embodiment.

Classification of the arts

If we now proceed to say something of what is involved in the classification of the arts, it is not for the sake of advocating any particular arrangement. Mere classification is always an idle study, but the general condition and essence of the difference between kindred things usually throws a searching light on their inmost nature.

Why, then, are there different arts? The simple answer to this question takes us, I believe, to the precise root and source of the whole principle of aesthetic expressiveness, which we have already analysed in more general terms.

Making patterns

We should begin, I am convinced, from the very simplest facts. Why do artists make different patterns, or treat the same pattern differently, in wood-carving, say, and clay-modelling, and wrought-iron work? If you can answer this question thoroughly, then, I am convinced, you have the secret of the classification of the arts and of the passage of feeling into its aesthetic embodiment; that is, in a word, the secret of beauty.

Why, then, in general does a worker in clay make different decorative patterns from a worker in wrought-iron? I wish I could go into this question with illustrations and details, but

[1] Cp. what Pater said of colour, that it is "a spirit upon things, by which they become expressive to the spirit."

I will admit at once that I am not really competent to do so, though I have taken very great interest in the problem. But in general there can surely be no doubt of the answer. You cannot make the same things in clay as you can in wrought-iron, except by a *tour de force*. The feeling of the work is, I suppose, altogether different. The metal challenges you, coaxes you, as William Morris said of the molten glass, to do a particular kind of thing with it, where its tenacity and ductility makes themselves felt. The clay, again, is delightful, I take it, to handle, to those who have a talent for it; but it is delightful of course in quite different manipulations from those of the wrought-iron. I suppose its facility of surface, how it lends itself to modelling or to throwing on the wheel, must be its great charm. Now the decorative patterns which are carried out in one or the other may, of course, be suggested *ab extra* by a draughtsman, and have all sorts of properties and interests in themselves as mere lines on paper. But when you come to carry them out in the medium, then, if they are appropriate, or if you succeed in adapting them, they become each a special phase of the embodiment of your whole delight and interest of "body-and-mind" in handling the clay or metal or wood or molten glass. It is alive in your hands, and its life grows or rather magically springs into shapes which it, and you in it, seem to desire and feel inevitable. The feeling for the medium, the sense of what can rightly be done in it only or better than in anything else, and the charm and fascination of doing it so—these, I take it, are the real clue to the fundamental question of aesthetics, which is "how feeling and its body are created adequate to one another." It is parallel to the question in general philosophy, "Why the soul has a body." It is the same sort of thing as the theory of the rising mountain, but it is much less open to caprice, being absolute fact all through, and it explains not merely the interpretation of lines and shapes, but the whole range and working of the aesthetic imagination in the province of fine art, which is its special province.

The fundamental question of aesthetics

To this doctrine belongs the very fruitful modern topic of

the relation of beautiful handicraft with the workman's life, as the outcome and expression of his body-and-mind, and amid all the disparagement which the most recent views of art are apt to throw upon Ruskin, we must remember that it was first and foremost to his inspired advocacy that this point of view owes its recognition to-day, and William Morris, for instance, recognised him, in this respect at least, as his master.

The differences of the great arts then are simply such differences as those between clay-modelling, wood-carving, and wrought-iron work, developed on an enormous scale, and with their inevitable consequences for whole provinces of aesthetic imagination.

Delight in the medium

For this is a fact of the highest importance. Every craftsman, we saw, feels the peculiar delight and enjoys the peculiar capacity of his own medium. This delight and sense of capacity are of course not confined to the moments when he is actually manipulating his work. His fascinated imagination lives in the powers of his medium; he thinks and feels in terms of it; it is the peculiar body of which *his* aesthetic imagination and no other is the peculiar soul.

Thus there grow up the distinct traditions, the whole distinctive worlds of imaginative thought and feeling, in which the great imaginative arts have their life and being.

The ideal in art

And this leads to the important question, what is meant by *the ideal in art*. The essential point is, as we saw when speaking of the idealisation of nature, that the ideal should not be a tendency which is negatively related to the fullest aesthetic expression. The ideal has often indicated a generalisation and abstraction, ultimately depending on the notion that to get at the root and law of things is to get at a generalised common element in which they resemble one another. But we saw that if it means anything in application to nature, it means the heightened expression of character and individuality which come of a faith in the life and divinity with which the external world is instinct and inspired.

This same conception of the ideal is the lesson of our doc-

trine of art. The ideal of every art must be revealed, I take it, in terms of the art itself; and it must be what underlies the whole series of efforts which the artist's imagination has made and is making, to create, in his own medium, an embodied feeling in which he can rest satisfied. It is the world as he has access to it through his art. It may seem to him more than any of his works; but it only has existence in them and in the effort which they imply when taken all together. The danger is to try and make a picture of this effort, apart from any of its achievements, which is really nothing. Then you get the enfeebled ideal, which means the omission of all character and individuality.

Now let us take a particular case. If our view of the distinction and connection of the arts is right, and it is simply a question of the medium adopted by each, and the capacities of that medium as proved by experience, what is to be said of the distinctive character of *poetry?* It seems in a sense to have almost no material element, to work directly with significant ideas in which the objects of the imagination are conveyed. Language is so transparent, that it disappears, so to speak, into its own meaning, and we are left with no characteristic medium at all.

The distinctive character of poetry

I do not think there can be any doubt about the true attitude here. Poetry, like the other arts, has a physical or at least a sensuous medium, and this medium is sound. It is, however, significant sound, uniting inseparably in itself the factors of formal expression through an immediate pattern, and of representation through the meanings of language, exactly as sculpture and painting deal at once and in the same vision both with formal patterns and with significant shapes. That language is a physical fact with its own properties and qualities is easily seen by comparing different tongues, and noting the form which different patterns, such as sapphic or hexameter verse, necessarily receive in different languages, such as Greek and Latin. To make poetry in different languages, *e.g.* in French and German, is as different a task as to make decorative work in clay and iron. The sound metre and meaning are the same inseparable prod-

The poet's medium

uct in a poem as much as the colour, form, and embodied feeling in a picture. And it is only an illusion to suppose that because you have significant sentences in poetry, therefore you are dealing with meanings which remain the same outside the poem, any more than a tree or a person whom you think you recognise in a picture, is, as you know them at home so to speak, *the* tree or *the* person *of* the picture. Poetry no more keeps its meaning when turned into corresponding prose, than a picture or a sonata keeps its meaning in the little analyses they print in the catalogues or programmes.

Shelley, according to Professor Bradley, had a feeling of the kind referred to. Poetry seemed to him to deal with a perfectly apt and transparent medium, with no qualities of its own, and therefore approaching to being no medium at all, but created out of nothing by the imagination for the use of the imagination. While the media employed by the other arts, being gross and physical and having independent qualities of their own, seemed to him rather obstacles in the way of expression than apt instruments of it. The answer to such a view is what we have just given.

It is the qualities of the media which give them the capacity to serve as embodiments of feeling; and sonorous language, the medium of poetry, has its peculiarities and definite capacities precisely like the others.

Here, I cannot but think, we are obliged to part company, with some regret, from Benedetto Croce. He is possessed, as so often is the case with him, by a fundamental truth, so intensely that he seems incapable of apprehending what more is absolutely necessary to its realisation. Beauty, he sees, is for the mind and in the mind. A physical thing, supposed unperceived and unfelt, cannot be said in the full sense to possess beauty. But he forgets throughout, I must think, that though feeling is necessary to its embodiment, yet also the embodiment is necessary to feeling. To say that because beauty implies a mind, therefore it is an internal state, and its physical embodiment is something secondary and incidental, and merely brought into being for the sake of permanence and communication—this seems to me a profound

Theories of Croce

error of principle, a false idealism. It meets us, however, throughout Croce's system, according to which "intuition"—the inward vision of the artist—is the only true expression. External media, he holds, are, strictly speaking, superfluous, so that there is no meaning in distinguishing between one mode of expression and another (as between paint and musical sound and language). Therefore there can be no classification of the arts, and no fruitful discussion of what can better be done by one art than by another. And aesthetic—the philosophy of expression—is set down as all one with linguistic—the philosophy of speech. For there is no meaning in distinguishing between language in the sense of speech, and other modes of expression. Of course, if he had said that speech is not the only form of language, but that every art speaks to us in a language of its own, that would have had much to be said for it. But I do not gather that that is his intention.

His notion is not a new one among theorists. It really is deeply rooted in a philosophical blunder. No doubt it seems obvious, when once pointed out, that things are not all there, not complete in all qualities, except when they are appreciated in a mind. And then, having rightly observed that this is so, we are apt to go on and say that you have them complete, and have all you want of them, if you have them before your mind and have not the things in bodily presence at all. But the blunder is, to think that you can have them completely before your mind without having their bodily presence at all. And because of this blunder, it seems fine and "ideal" to say that the artist operates in the bodiless medium of pure thought or fancy, and that the things of the bodily world are merely physical causes of sensation, which do not themselves enter into the effects he uses. It is rather a natural thing to say about poetry, because we discount the physical side of language. We glance at its words and do not sound them. And Shelley, as we saw, says something very like that.

But at the very beginning of all this notion, as we said, there is a blunder. Things, it is true, are not complete without minds, but minds, again, are not complete without things;

not any more, we might say, than minds are complete without bodies. Our resources in the way of sensation, and our experiences in the way of satisfactory and unsatisfactory feeling, are all of them won out of our intercourse with things, and are thought and imagined by us as qualities and properties of the things. Especially we see this in music. Here we have an art entirely made up of a material—musical tone—which one may say does not exist at all in the natural world, and is altogether originated by our inventive and imaginative manipulation of physical things, pressing on in the line of creative discovery which something very like accident must at first have opened up to us.[1] Apart from this imaginative operation upon physical things, our fancy in the realm of music could have done as good as nothing.

Mind and thing —feeling and material

And in principle it is the same with all the arts. All the material and the physical process which the artist uses—take our English language as used in poetry for an example—has been elaborated and refined, and, so to speak, consecrated by ages of adaptation and application in which it has been fused and blended with feeling—and it carries the life-blood of all this endeavour in its veins; and that is how, as we have said over and over again, feelings get their embodiment, and embodiments get their feeling. If you try to cut the thought and fancy loose from the body of the stuff in which it moulds its pictures and poetic ideas and musical constructions, you impoverish your fancy, and arrest its growth, and reduce it to a bloodless shade. When I pronounce even a phrase so commonplace in itself as "Rule, Britannia!" the actual vibrations of the sound, the bodily experience I am aware of in saying it, is alive with the history of England which passed into the words in the usage and formation of the language. Up to a certain point, language is poetry ready-made for us.

And I suppose that a greater painter, in his actual handling of his brush, has present with him a sense of meaning and fitness which is one with the joy of execution, both of

[1]This applies even to the development of song, so far as that involves a musical system.

which the experience of a lifetime has engrained in the co-operation of his hand and eye. I take it, there is a pleasure in the brush stroke, which *is also* a sense of success in the use of the medium, and of meaning in hitting the exact effect which he wants to get. We common people have something analogous to all this, when we enjoy the too-rare sensation of having found the right word. In such "finding" there is a creative element. A word is, quite strictly speaking, not used twice in the same sense.

Croce says, indeed, that the artist has every stroke of the brush in his mind as complete before he executes it as after. The suggestion is that using the brush adds nothing to his inward or mental work of art. I think that this is false idealism. The bodily thing adds immensely to the mere idea and fancy, in wealth of qualities and connections. If we try to cut out the bodily side of our world, we shall find that we have reduced the mental side to a mere nothing.

False idealism

And so, when we said that you can carry away the soul of a thing and leave its body behind, we always added that you must in doing so confer its soul upon a new and spiritualised body. Your imagination must be an imagination of something, and if you refuse to give that something a definite structure, you pass from the aesthetic semblance to the region of abstract thought. I have spoken of sound as physical; if this is a difficulty it is enough to call it sensuous, and sensuous in immediate connection with other physical properties and experiences. This applies both to music and to language.

All this later argument of ours, starting from the importance of medium and technique, has aimed at exhibiting in detail the double process of creation and contemplation which is implied in the aesthetic attitude, and the impossibility of separating one factor of it from another. And it is the same question as that stated in other words, how a feeling can be got into an object. This is the central problem of the aesthetic attitude; and, as we have seen, the best material for solving it for us who are not great artists comes from any minor experience we may have at

Getting feeling into an object

command in which we have been aware of the outgoing of feeling into expression. We must think not merely of the picture in the gallery or the statue in the museum, but of the song and the dance, the dramatic reading, the entering into music, or the feel of the material in the minor arts, or simply, of the creative discovery of the right word.

The festal or social view of art will help us here. Suppose a tribe or a nation has won a great victory; "they are feeling big, and they want to make something big," as I have heard an expert say. That, I take it, is the rough account of the beginning of the aesthetic attitude. And according to their capacity and their stage of culture they may make a pile of their enemies' skulls, or they may build the Parthenon. The point of the aesthetic attitude lies in the adequate fusion of body and soul, where the soul is a feeling, and the body its expression, without residue on either side.

How we may discover the aesthetic value of a piece of art may be seen in the following passage from *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism,* by Charles Mills Gayley and Fred Newton Scott (Ginn & Co., 1901). "The *absolute* aesthetic worth of a literary production is decided on its own merits purely, without reference to the stage of culture which it occupies, its artistic environment, or the value of similar productions of the past or present. A work of absolute aesthetic worth has universal import; it belongs to the literature of the world. The *relative* aesthetic worth of a literary production is determined by comparing it with similar productions of the nation, and especially of the period. A work may stand relatively to the narrow or undeveloped literature of the race very high, but absolutely very low. Aesthetic criticism is always liable to personal bias or prejudice, but the investigator can, in some degree, guard himself against unfair decisions by subjecting the production under examination to the following questions: (1) Is the tendency of the work worthy? (2) Is the material (the subject) worthy and comformable to the tendency already described? (3) Is the subject fittingly and artistically handled? *i. e.,* is the technical composition or treatment successful? (4) Is the style appropriate and artistic? (5) If the work is a poem, is the rhythmical (metrical) form appropriate and artistic? (6) If epic or dramatic, does the execution of the story satisfy the requirements of essential probability? Are the characters psychologically true and consistent? Do the descriptions (epic) satisy the requirements of probability? Other tests will suggest themselves to the critic. . . . But all such tests are reducible to three: Does the work possess qualities of ideal worth, of universal acceptability, of permanent vitality? Now, when this interrogatory can be unreservedly answered in the affirmative, the production concerned may safely be esteemed as of absolute aesthetic value; but when, in answer to the interrogatory, reference must be had to the spirit and productions of the people or the period, the work in question is probably of relative, not of absolute, aesthetic value."—*op. cit.,* pp. 361-2.—*Editor.*

THE QUESTION OF STYLE

By ARNOLD BENNETT

In discussing the value of particular books, I have heard people say—people who were timid about expressing their views of literature in the presence of literary men: "It may be bad from a literary point of view, but there are very good things in it." Or: "I dare say the style is very bad, but really the book is very interesting and suggestive." Or: "I'm not an expert, and so I never bother my head about good style. All I ask for is good matter. And when I have got it, critics may say what they like about the book." And many other similar remarks, all showing that in the minds of the speakers there existed a notion that style is something supplementary to, and distinguishable from, matter; a sort of notion that a writer who wanted to be classical had first to find and arrange his matter, and then dress it up elegantly in a costume of style, in order to please beings called literary critics.

Style and matter inseparable

This is a misapprehension. Style cannot be distinguished from matter. When a writer conceives an idea he conceives it in a form of words. That form of words constitutes his style, and it is absolutely governed by the idea. The idea can only exist in words, and it can only exist in one form of words. You cannot say exactly the same thing in two different ways. Slightly alter the expression, and you slightly alter the idea. Surely it is obvious that the expression cannot be altered without altering the thing expressed! A writer, having conceived and expressed an idea, may, and probably will, "polish it up." But what does he polish up? To say that he polishes up his style is merely to say that he is polishing up his idea, that he has discovered faults or imperfections in his idea, and is perfecting it. An idea exists in proportion as it is expressed;

From *Literary Taste: How to Form It,* by Arnold Bennett. Reprinted by special permission of George H. Doran Company, Publishers.

Mr. Arnold Bennett is one of the ablest of the English realistic novelists and dramatists. His *Old Wives' Tale* (1908) is perhaps the best of his novels. See footnote, p. 24.—*Editor.*

it exists when it is expressed, and not before. It expresses itself. A clear idea is expressed clearly, and a vague idea vaguely. You need but take your own case and your own speech. For just as science is the development of common-sense, so is literature the development of common daily speech. The difference between science and common-sense is simply one of degree; similarly with speech and literature. Well, when you "know what you think," you succeed in saying what you think, in making yourself understood. When you "don't know what to think," your expressive tongue halts. And note how in daily life the characteristics of your style follow your mood; how tender it is when you are tender, how violent when you are violent. You have said to yourself in moments of emotion: "If only I could write——," etc. You were wrong. You ought to have said: "If only I could *think*—on this high plane." When you have thought clearly you have never had any difficulty in saying what you thought, though you may occasionally have had some difficulty in keeping it to yourself. And when you cannot express yourself, depend upon it that you have nothing precise to express, and that what incommodes you is not the vain desire to express, but the vain desire to *think* more clearly. All this just to illustrate how style and matter are co-existent, and inseparable, and alike.

Bad style

You cannot have good matter with bad style. Examine the point more closely. A man wishes to convey a fine idea to you. He employs a form of words. That form of words is his style. Having read, you say: "Yes, this idea is fine." The writer has therefore achieved his end. But in what imaginable circumstances can you say: "Yes, this idea is fine, but the style is not fine"? The sole medium of communication between you and the author has been the form of words. The fine idea has reached you. How? In the words, by the words. Hence the fineness must be in the words. You may say, superiorly: "He has expressed himself clumsily, but I can *see* what he means." By what light? By something in the words, in the style. That something is fine. Moreover, if the style is clumsy, are you

sure that you can see what he means? You cannot be quite sure. And, at any rate, you cannot see distinctly. The "matter" is what actually reaches you, and it must necessarily be affected by the style.

Style is the man

Still further to comprehend what style is, let me ask you to think of a writer's style exactly as you would of the gestures and manners of an acquaintance. You know the man whose demeanour is "always calm," but whose passions are strong. How do you know that his passions are strong? Because he "gives them away" by some small, but important, part of his demeanour, such as the twitching of a lip or the whitening of the knuckles caused by clenching the hand. In other words, his demeanour, fundamentally, is not calm. You know the man who is always "smoothly polite and agreeable," but who affects you unpleasantly. Why does he affect you unpleasantly? Because he is tedious, and therefore disagreeable, and because his politeness is not real politeness. You know the man who is awkward, shy, clumsy, but who, nevertheless, impresses you with a sense of dignity and force. Why? Because mingled with that awkwardness and so forth *is* dignity. You know the blunt, rough fellow whom you instinctively guess to be affectionate—because there is "something in his tone" or "something in his eyes." In every instance the demeanour, while perhaps seeming to be contrary to the character, is really in accord with it. The demeanour never contradicts the character. It is one part of the character that contradicts another part of the character. For, after all, the blunt man *is* blunt, and the awkward man *is* awkward, and these characters are defects. The demeanour merely expresses them. The two men would be better if, while conserving their good qualities, they had the superficial attributes of smoothness and agreeableness possessed by the gentleman who is unpleasant to you. And as regards this latter, it is not his superficial attributes which are unpleasant to you, but his other qualities. In the end the character is shown in the demeanour; and the demeanour is a consequence of the character and resembles the character. So with style and matter. You may argue that the

blunt, rough man's demeanour is unfair to his tenderness. I do not think so. For his churlishness is really very trying and painful, even to the man's wife, though a moment's tenderness will make her and you forget it. The man really is churlish, and much more often than he is tender. His demeanour is merely just to his character. So, when a writer annoys you for ten pages and then enchants you for ten lines, you must not explode against his style. You must not say that his style won't let his matter "come out." You must remember the churlish, tender man. The more you reflect, the more clearly you will see that faults and excellences of style are faults and excellences of matter itself.

The style of Carlyle

One of the most striking illustrations of this neglected truth is Thomas Carlyle. How often has it been said that Carlyle's matter is marred by the harshness and the eccentricities of his style? But Carlyle's matter is harsh and eccentric to precisely the same degree as his style is harsh and eccentric. Carlyle was harsh and eccentric. His behaviour was frequently ridiculous, if it were not abominable. His judgments were often extremely bizarre. When you read one of Carlyle's fierce diatribes, you say to yourself: "This is splendid. The man's enthusiasm for justice and truth is glorious." But you also say: "He is a little unjust and a little untruthful. He goes too far. He lashes too hard." These things are not the style; they are the matter. And when, as in his greatest moments, he is emotional and restrained at once, you say: "This is the real Carlyle." Kindly notice how perfect the style has become! No harshness or eccentricities now! And if that particular matter is the "real" Carlyle, then that particular style is Carlyle's "real" style. But when you say "real" you would more properly say "best." "This is the best Carlyle." If Carlyle had always been at his best he would have counted among the supreme geniuses of the world. But he was a mixture. His style is the expression of mixture. The faults are only in the style because they are in the matter.

You will find that, in classical literature, the style always

Style conditioned by mood of matter

follows the mood of the matter. Thus, Charles Lamb's essay on *Dream Children* begins quite simply, in a calm, narrative manner, enlivened by a certain quippishness concerning the children. The style is grave when great-grandmother Field is the subject, and when the author passes to a rather elaborate impression of the picturesque old mansion it becomes as it were consciously beautiful. This beauty is intensified in the description of the still more beautiful garden. But the real dividing point of the essay occurs when Lamb approaches his elder brother. He unmistakably marks the point with the phrase: "*Then, in somewhat a more heightened tone,* I told how," etc. Henceforward the style increases in fervour and in solemnity until the culmination of the essay is reached: "And while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech. . . ." Throughout, the style is governed by the matter. "Well," you say, "of course it is. It couldn't be otherwise. If it were otherwise it would be ridiculous. A man who made love as though he were preaching a sermon, or a man who preached a sermon as though he were teasing schoolboys, or a man who described a death as though he were describing a practical joke, must necessarily be either an ass or a lunatic." Just so. You have put it in a nutshell. You have disposed of the problem of style so far as it can be disposed of.

Reading for style

But what do those people mean who say: "I read such and such an author for the beauty of his style alone"? Personally, I do not clearly know what they mean (and I have never been able to get them to explain), unless they mean that they read for the beauty of sound alone. When you read a book there are only three things of which you may be conscious: (1) The significance of the words, which is inseparably bound up with the thought. (2) The look of the printed words on the page—I do not suppose that anybody reads any author for the visual beauty

of the words on the page. (3) The sound of the words, either actually uttered or imagined by the brain to be uttered. Now it is indubitable that words differ in beauty of sound. To my mind one of the most beautiful words in the English language is "pavement." Enunciate it, study its sound, and see what you think. It is also indubitable that certain combinations of words have a more beautiful sound than certain other combinations. Thus Tennyson held that the most beautiful line he ever wrote was: The mellow ousel fluting in the elm. Perhaps, as sound, it was. Assuredly it makes a beautiful succession of sounds, and recalls the bird-sounds which it is intended to describe. But does it live in the memory as one of the rare great Tennysonian lines? It does not. It has charm, but the charm is merely curious or pretty. A whole poem composed of lines with no better recommendation than that line has would remain merely curious or pretty. It would not permanently interest. It would be as insipid as a pretty woman who had nothing behind her prettiness. It would not live. One may remark in this connection how the merely varbal felicities of Tennyson have lost our esteem. Who will now proclaim the *Idylls of the King* as a masterpiece? Of the thousands of lines written by him which please the ear, only those survive of which the matter is charged with emotion. No! As regards the man who professes to read an author "for his style alone," I am inclined to think either that he will soon get sick of that author, or that he is deceiving himself and means the author's general temperament—not the author's verbal style, but a peculiar quality which runs through all the matter written by the author. Just as one may like a man for something which is always coming out of him, which one cannot define, and which is of the very essence of the man.

Judging style

In judging the style of an author, you must employ the same canons as you use in judging men. If you do this you will not be tempted to attach importance to trifles that are negligible. There can be no lasting friendship without respect. If an author's style is such that you cannot *respect* it, then you may be sure that,

despite any present pleasure which you may obtain from that author, there is something wrong with his matter, and that the pleasure will soon cloy. You must examine your sentiments towards an author. If when you have read an author you are pleased, without being conscious of aught but his mellifluousness, just conceive what your feelings would be after spending a month's holiday with a merely mellifluous man. If an author's style has pleased you, but done nothing except make you giggle, then reflect upon the ultimate tediousness of the man who can do nothing but jest. On the other hand, if you are impressed by what an author has said to you, but are aware of verbal clumsinesses in his work, you need worry about his "bad style" exactly as much and exactly as little as you would worry about the manners of a kind-hearted, keen-brained friend who was dangerous to carpets with a teacup in his hand. The friend's antics in a drawing-room are somewhat regrettable, but you would not say of him that his manners were bad. Again, if an author's style dazzles you instantly and blinds you to everything except its brilliant self, ask your soul, before you begin to admire his matter, what would be your final opinion of a man who at the first meeting fired his personality into you like a broadside. Reflect that, as a rule, the people whom you have come to esteem communicated themselves to you gradually, that they did not begin the entertainment with fireworks. In short, look at literature as you would look at life, and you cannot fail to perceive that, essentially, the style is the man. Decidedly you will never assert that you care nothing for style, that your enjoyment of an author's matter is unaffected by his style. And you will never assert, either, that style alone suffices for you.

If you are undecided upon a question of style, whether leaning to the favourable or to the unfavourable, the most prudent course is to forget that literary style exists. For, indeed, as style is understood by most people who have not analysed their impressions under the influence of literature, there is no such thing as literary style. You cannot divide literature into two elements and say: This is matter and that

style. Further, the significance and the worth of literature are to be comprehended and assessed in the same way as the significance and the worth of any other phenomenon: by the exercise of common-sense. Common-sense will tell you that nobody, not even a genius, can be simultaneously vulgar and distinguished, or beautiful and ugly, or precise and vague, or tender and harsh. And common-sense will therefore tell you that to try to set up vital contradictions between matter and style is absurd. When there is a superficial contradiction, one of the two mutually-contradicting qualities is of far less importance than the other. If you refer literature to the standards of life, common-sense will at once decide which quality should count heaviest in your esteem. You will be in no danger of weighing a mere maladroitness of manner against a fine trait of character, or of letting a graceful deportment blind you to a fundamental vacuity. When in doubt, ignore style, and think of the matter as you would think of an individual.

SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON

By THE EDITOR

1

Japanese painting

An English artist who renders the Orient has told how a Japanese boy learns to paint. Having already mastered the brush through long practice of writing, which to the Chinese and Japanese is a fine art in itself, and having learned the secrets of line and color from silent service in the master's studio, the novice is one day sent out of doors to follow the artist strokes of nature. For hours he will sit watching the iris lean from the wind, then spring back to snare the sunshine; or he will gaze into a pool where fish play like vagrant rainbows. Every changing gleam, every flowing motion is awaited, seen, and imaged in the mind. The lad returns to his corner, and with brush and color writes the memories down. Again and again he goes to the same pool or garden; again and again he strives to record the images. At last, flower, fish, and bird seem to drop living from his brush, as did rose and pearl from the lips of our fairy-tale maiden. There is in an American university a collection of Japanese paintings of many species of fish, so faithful in form and tint as to be treasured as scientific data. Yet the artist does not stop with such amazing imitation of nature, he does not for a moment confuse photographic realism with art. He cannot rest even in human portraiture: the actors, geishas, and samurai whom he paints must honorably arrange themselves as units of simplified color-patterns. The Japanese artist, in fact, prefers to paint the extra-human, partially because the particulars of nature fall more readily into artistic synthesis; partially also because in lotus and tiger, in pine-tree and sea-wave he divines that essential spirit or *kokoro* which eye has not seen but which the magic brush may surprise and reveal.

Near my work-table there has long hung a cheap Japanese wood-print, representing a crow perched amid cherry-blossoms: a central mass of dramatic black, with dashes of soft

brown to make leaves and of white to make petals, all against a wash of pearl-grey that does not pretend to be either earth or sky. The thing is life that does not look before or after, but rejoices to simply be. Somehow spring carols aloofly through these staccato whites, while the black figure by some shrug of shoulder, glint of eye diffuses a libertine, ironic, world-embracing fellowship. An imaginative jest at nature, this, and by an obscure artist—one remembers also the famous Hokusai who, scorning imitation, turns a vast storm-wave into sculptured jade and flings the foam aloft to congeal into fleeting gulls. And Okio who, on that priceless screen, with a few dim lines of broken rhythm spreads the sea, and above it, by a grey gesture, unleashes from the void the two wild geese that leave us dizzy with their swiftness, yet poise forever on wings of stone. As if they were thoughts and the sea were death.

Such are the images which the artist catches from the flux of things, such the sweet anguish he draws from the harp of life. Painting which thus moves us cannot result from keen perception and retentive memory alone, but requires also a sense for the humanly significant even in the non-human, a power to reconceive and vitalize fragmentary facts, a deftness in handling the expressive sensuous medium of the art that must be amazing to the ungifted and the untrained. The materials are supplied by sense through the experience called living; they must be treasured in memory because no single or momentary aspect of things is sufficiently meaningful; they must be selected, supplemented, rewrought before a work of art is achieved. This purposeful play with images and ideas, which are the mental counterparts of sensations and perceptions, is called imagination. It is what makes art possible; more than we realize, it also determines society and all that we call humane. In daily life, in the efforts of science to understand and control that life and the stubborn physical world conditioning it, in the efforts of art to interpret and to delight all who live, imagination is a prime factor. To appreciate the nature and rôle

Need of imagination

of imagination in both the practical and the aesthetic realm, we need to recall some of the simpler explanations offered by psychologists.

2

Knowing through imaging

The objective world—that complexity or stream of things felt to be external to our thinking selves—is continually being reflected into us and thus "known" through sense contacts and mental recognition. Through eye, ear, finger-tip and the rest, with the connected nerves, we maintain *liaison* with this external world, and a first report of light, sound, pressure, momentarily cognized by itself, is called a sensation. It seems to come directly from an outside object, and to belong to it. But immediately upon entering consciousness it is related to records of previous sensations, becoming enriched in content, somewhat like a man enlisting in an army that serves the common cause. At once it joins a squad or a corporal's guard, and the whole is placed and evaluated, to be theorized about as a perception. It is now knowledge about a fact, which is still present outside. It means that fact, as, for example, whiteness and coldness together may mean snow blown against the cheek. When a thing or happening that has been perceived ceases to be felt as present it remains, if at all, as image or idea. Therefore memory has been defined as knowledge of things that were physically present but are no longer so.

Now when sensations come they affect us as pleasant or unpleasant, or in biological terms as either physically upbuilding and promotive of the life process or physically destructive and diminishing of life. Familiar or continual sensations like the presence of light or the weight of clothing, adjustments of the bodily organs to routine encounter with color, form, sound, etc., are so habitually prepared for and registered as to be generally unattended to. So what the psychologist calls the affection—sense of pleasantness or of unpleasantness—natural to any of these workaday sensation-groups tends to lessen with repetition and to cease. And here we are reminded of one of the functions of art: by means of characteristic or associational images it restores to the drab

scene, the parrot babble, the stale notion, the commonplace good or evil deed, their pristine charm or lost significance. It even reworks magically what is discordant, mysterious, terrifying, or loathly, enabling new perceptions of these that bring emotions strangely delightful.

Feeling and emotion

We have just been using other terms that, although familiar, need definition. To the psychologist, feeling is the effect of a sensation or a simple sensation-group coming through a bodily organ and rising into consciousness with its peculiar affection of pleasantness or unpleasantness. So one is properly said to have a feeling of heat or of hunger. Emotion is differentiated as the effect of a group of sensations related through repeated experience with other groups, all colored by affection. One is therefore said to be under emotion when a set of circumstances, a series of incidents, an accumulation of facts or of supplemental inferences, or other integration of experiences excites hope, anger, pride, love, dread, or what not. Emotion is then the conscious side of a general bodily adjustment to an external complex, and is stronger than mere feeling. When prolonged, emotion is called mood: thus dread may become melancholy; approval, enthusiasm. When a mood in turn continues and comes to control the personality, it determines temperament. So a man may be found, in the old terminology, mercurial, jovial, or saturnine. Or, again, artistic: sensitive, that is, and driven to self-expression through the concrete. And art, by vivifying ideas that were once affective perceptions and by combining these into new totalities through associations cunningly sought to this end, creates permanent sources of wonder, sympathy, and joy.

Scientific uses of imagination

To the scientific man, who is but little subject to the tyranny of names, imagination is far from seeming mere artistic moonshine. Observation and experiment fill his note-books; to heap up simple facts he will break up the most stony or venerable associations. Yet a world in fragments is not a world possessed and understood, and the aims of science are to discover relationships among discrete phenomena, to reunite scattered

cosmic families, to explain ever profounder problems by ever fewer principles.

But always the facts recorded must remain pitifully few as contrasted with the myriads known to exist: how escape from the labyrinth with some little usable plunder? Be practical! Risk a guess as to the nature and meaning of the facts unrecorded, follow a gleam, drag the sea with fairy net, act upon a hunch, set a snare for truth and label it "scientific hypothesis." For upon the ocean that swells about the shores of all our happy or dolorous isles of fact and the known, only imagination can pilot the ship which it alone has built. And then long after the happy guess, the recurrent dream, the tentative theory, Neptune will be discovered, or evolution will be proved. Out of the emotional, because out of the ultimately sensational, nature this piece of imaging will spring, and when it is found at last to have captured truth, even the scientist's habitual reserve breaks down..

The Darwinian theory

"In October, 1838," writes Darwin in his autobiography, "that is, fifteen months after I had begun my systematic enquiry, I happened to read for amusement 'Malthus on Population,' and being well prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence which everywhere goes on, from long-continued observation of the habits of animals and plants, it at once struck me that under these circumstances favorable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavorable ones to be destroyed. The result of this would be the formation of new species. Here, then, I had at last got a theory by which to work; but I was so anxious to avoid prejudice that I determined not for some time to write even the briefest sketch of it. In June, 1842, I first allowed myself the satisfaction of writing a very brief abstract of my theory in pencil in 35 pages; and this was enlarged during the summer of 1844 into one of 230 pages, which I had fairly copied out and still possess.[1]

[1]It was not until the fall of 1858 that Darwin undertook to set forth at length his accumulated data and the vitalizing hypothesis, and not until November, 1859, that the *Origin of Species* was published.

"But at this time I overlooked one problem of great importance; and it is astonishing to me, except on the principle of Columbus and his egg, how I could have overlooked it and its solution. This problem is the tendency in organic beings descended from the same stock to diverge in character as they become modified. That they have diverged greatly is obvious from the manner in which species of all kinds can be classed under genera, genera under families, families under sub-orders, and so forth; and I can remember the very spot in the road, whilst in my carriage, when to my joy the solution occurred to me; and this was long after I had come to Down. The solution, as I believe, is that the modified offspring of all dominant and increasing forms tend to become adapted to many and highly dversified places in the economy of nature."[1]

Emotion and science

Darwin's frankness yields other data of significance in our present study: his scientific work was grounded upon emotion, and the subconscious play of ideas guided his waking investigations. He speaks of his "love of natural science," but adds: "This pure love has, however, been much aided by the ambition to be esteemed by my fellow naturalists." And again: "I have steadily endeavoured to keep my mind free so as to give up any hypothesis, however much beloved (and I cannot resist forming one on every subject), as soon as facts are shown to be opposed to it. Indeed, I have had no choice but to act in this manner, for with the exception of the Coral Reefs, I cannot remember a single first-formed hypothesis which had not after a time to be given up or greatly modified. This has naturally led me to distrust greatly deductive reasoning in the mixed sciences. On the other hand, I am not very skeptical,—a frame of mind which I believe to be injurious to the progress of science."

The scientist discusses imagination

A little further testimony, to show that it is not merely the temperament of one scientific man that we have to build upon. "With accurate experiment and observation to work upon," declared John Tyndall in a famous lecture, "Imagination becomes the architect of physical theory. ... Scientific men fight shy of

the word because of its ultra-scientific connotations; but the fact is that without the exercise of this power our knowledge of nature would be a mere tabulation of co-existences and sequences. We should still believe in the succession of day and night, of summer and winter; but the conception of Force would vanish from our universe; causal relations would disappear, and with them that science which is now binding the parts of nature to an organic whole." And Darwin's coadjutor Huxley has told us that the blundering practical man and the wary scientist alike are compelled to voyage the unknown upon some rude raft or magic carpet of hypothesis, an essentially imaginative creation. Nowadays those who care nothing for art and little for science proclaim the psychology of advertising and the art of salesmanship. What can it all amount to except a more effective formulation of the procedure instinctive throughout history with every leader and every artist? To win a man to our purposes, we must slip into his shoes and under his skin. We must look out of his eyes upon the goods we would have him buy, and make his heart beat at the touch of the sword we would have him wield.

The scientist who finds imagination an ever-present fact and a mighty instrument, of course theorizes about it. He describes it as the general representative function of mind, an activity guided by will, bent upon synthesis, functioning with an artistic logic that can marry things as strangely different as idea and form, universal and particular. It turns abstract reasoning to concrete proof. Evil it does not recognize, but it reveals this murderer, conceived in disease, perverted in a slum, maddened by industrial exploitation, hurling at last a bomb. It does not talk to us of courage, but shows this soldier creeping through no-man's-land after his buddy. It does not anatomize love, but points to Juliet and Emma Bovary. Upon mind it will not speculate, but it moulds the contorted aching Thinker. God it has not beheld, but it chants the psalms of David and paints the Last Judgment. As for the

[1]"Autobiography," in *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin,* ed. Francis Darwin, Appleton, 1919, 2 vols., I:68-69.

conduct of life, see what a political catchword, a hymn of hate, or a Raemaker's cartoon may do. We form ourselves upon newspaper articles, but when the facts of oppression and disaster are cabled in from all corners of the world too fast to be made art, we read but do not picture, and therefore but slightly feel. Only when some roused artist writes the history of Uncle Tom or Smike or Jean Valjean, of Marguerite or Tess or Anna Karenina, of the "Dauber," the "Idiot," or the "Fool in Christ," do we feel the scorching fires of life.

3

Acquiring experience

The manner in which different men acquire the experiences that may be worked over into art or science should be noted. Beethoven, deaf, still hears symphonies of no tone; blind Milton still sees the flowers of Eden bower and the darkness visible of hell. McAndrew, of Kipling's hymn, feels beneath his hands a universe built, rigged, and run by a Calvinistic Shipwright: "From coupler-flange to spindle-guide I see Thy hand, O God!" And the Faultless Painter, at the close of a weary day in a love-scanted, shame-filled life, feels autumn in everything: "As if I saw alike my work and self and all that I was born to be and do, a twilight-piece."

As for ourselves in the workaday world, we are classed by the psychologist as motiles or tactiles, audiles or visuals, according as one or another sense is most active in bringing us experience and yielding us images. A child of three who showed no willingness to learn the alphabet from book or blocks was allowed to play with a typewriter and then taught how to strike out the word cat. After much gleeful practice he was asked one day, when separated from the machine, how he spelled the famous word. Delightedly but in complete silence he crooked his pink forefingers and made three vigorous jabs in the air: he was striking the required three letters according to their position on the keyboard he had used. There had been previous tinkerings with screws, locks, and tools all about the house, but this was the final demonstration: the youngster was a "motile" through and through. As for

yourself—when doubtful how to spell a word, do you take up a pencil and let your hand go through the right movements, as you might let your horse pick the way home across darkened pastures? Do you play violin or piano with unwatched fingers that are still faithful to the old muscular paths and will settle surely to the theme after whimsical improvisation? Then you, too, are motor-minded. But some of us hear our thoughts in words and sentences, though no sound comes; and when we think of absent friends, their voices fill the room. With others, the faces of dear ones go everywhere, with lip and eye expressive; and the scenes of childhood or of distant lands return to dissolve away blank walls. It is thought that women more than men dwell thus with images, and that as all of us grow older abstract ideas come greyly to their places. Certainly the emotional and artistic temperament knows more of image-making than does the rational and scientific; but the Goethes command equally thought and perception.

Plastic ideas

More than most of us realize, each artist is conditioned by his peculiar sensuous medium, and our criticism of him must reckon with that. Yet he must work first and last also in the ideal element, a medium more subtile still. Out of images and ideas must come the plot, the *leit-motif,* the form that is to animate paint or clay. Before the final incarnation, a hundred shapes may flock and flee within the mind. Images stir and bud; they creep, and spin their dreams. Under the moon of thought they inwing their destined mates. They plunge at last to immortality of cold flame in painting or in poem.

From life these images will start, but they come best to bloom far away from its Gorgon stare. "The painter Fromentin," remarks Ribot,[1] "who was proud that he found after two or three years 'an exact recollection' of things he had barely noticed on a journey, makes elsewhere, however, the following confession: 'My memory of things, although very faithful, has never the certainty admissible as documentary evidence.

[1] *Essay on the Creative Imagination,* by Th. Ribot, tr. by A. H. N. Baron, 1906, p. 17.

The weaker it grows, the more is it changed in becoming the property of my memory and the more valuable is it for the work that I intend for it. In proportion as the exact form becomes altered, another form, partly real, partly imaginary, which I believe preferable, takes its place.'" The sculptor Rodin once asserted: "I obey Nature in everything, and I never pretend to command her. My only ambition is to be servilely faithful to her." "You are obliged to alter—" began his friend. "Not a jot!" "But, after all, the proof that you do change it is this, that the cast would give not at all the same impression as your work." Rodin reflected an instant, then said: "That is so! Because the cast is less true than my sculpture! . . . . The cast only reproduces the exterior; I reproduce, besides that, the spirit which is certainly also a part of nature."[1]

Nature and art

But let us view elements and processes through the eyes of the psychologist. An object once perceived but no longer materially present may still, as we have noted, be possessed through its mental counterpart, the idea. To put it otherwise, a perception results from sensations coming from outside the body, while an idea results from sensations aroused within the brain itself. Or in text-book terms, "An idea differs from a perception in that it consists chiefly of images, whereas the perception consists chiefly of sensations." You perceive a tree when you look directly upon it; with eyes shut, you ideate it. From the perceived object come sensations of maximum vividness and fidelity to fact. When only the idea remains, the now internally stimulated sensations are less vivid, less enduring, and less accordant with fact. But as Rodin and Fromentin have testified, it is through ideas that the artist realizes.

Image-making

In the narrow sense, to image anything is to ideate it in terms of itself. The call of crow or bluebird is imaged by an auditory idea; the weight of a stone by a motor idea; the texture of sealskin by a tactual idea, and the look of a face by a visual. Visual images are most abundantly at our disposal, yet even a marine painting, composed of visual elements

[1] *Art*, by Auguste Rodin, tr. by Mrs. R. Fedden, 1912, pp. 30-31.

only, in proportion as it represents to one who knows them the aspect of mighty waters will do also more. As his eye takes the green plunge or ranges the dim horizon for a sail, the wind blows damp and cool against his cheek; the smell of kelp and barnacle overfreights his breath; his tongue is dulled with salt, and his ears are tumultuous with creak and slap of rope and sheet, the slash of breakers, and the sea-birds' shrieking. For every sense, then, its proper images, and each artist will concern himself chiefly with those readily compassable by his medium. Yet every material object—a child, say, or the book he reads, the apple he eats, the tune he whistles—turns in actual life several faces to be read by several senses, and therefore the painter, the musician, the poet, though addressing one sense mainly and even striking out but a single image, will find himself touching a talisman or repeating a magic phrase. Images proper to other artistic media and ideas incident to other purposes than his own troop forth at his Open, sesame! from the reverberating caves of our memory to betray us into glad or appalling thralldom.

4

It will be found that few discussions of imagination escape the use of terms like "play" and "spontaneity." This is because the activity called imagining does not have to be set going by an effort of will, nor maintained with weariness. Images come trooping unaccountably, join hands and weave unpredictable dance figures, dart away and return, and like swallows ripple the waters of life or settle to their hidden nests in tune to music as unfailing as by us unheard. Images are children of emotion, and therefore most exuberant when sensation and feeling run full tide under the moon of wish. Therefore it is that every lover is discovered to be an artist—if never before nor afterward—for upon the waves of emotion he is tossed into the upper sea, and wills so ardently his wings that he may actually sustain a singing flight in the more subtile element.

Animism

Less ecstatic and more prolonged exercise of imagination may be observed in the manifestations of animism, that instinctive reading of human

quality into sub-human existence, which makes natural and explicable much that we are perplexed by or contemptuous of in savage culture and child life. To the American Indian an oracular statement that man has developed his humanity out of beasthood and something lower would occasion neither surprise nor disbelief. The bear and the deer are the Indian's "younger brothers," to be killed for food and clothing only after pious apologies and taboo-lifting prayer. The "First People," he will tell you, were animals who talked like men and had the might of spirits. They lived in a warless world until they fell into strange disobedience to the Great Spirit and were transformed to rocks, stars, and animals such as we know; they were our ancestors. All things, to the Indian and to savages generally, are of the same substance but of diverse forms and varying life-quality. There is life in the stillness of stone, in the breath of water-lily, in flash and roll of storm, as in man himself. Account for all this by whatever hypothesis of day-dream or night-dream you please, the facts remain, and they have imparted terror, preserved hope, administered consolation.

Our own children are animistic, treating their toys as if alive, feeling conscious presences everywhere. Helen Keller records that she had to argue herself into believing dogs could not comprehend all she said to them: she used to apologize to them for little hurts or rudenesses as to human beings. Hudson, the great naturalist and story-writer, even in the grey years had profoundly moving intimations from nature that were but little different from the delicious terrors of the animistic childhood depicted in *Far Away and Long Ago*.

Dream, reason, and art

The processes of animistic myth-making, of dream, of reasoning, and of passive and active imagination are nowadays illuminatingly correlated by psychologists, on grounds that should be considered in any analysis of artistry. We practical men are quite prepared to believe that the imaginings of poets and the phantasmagoria of dreams are closely akin. But the "reasoning" upon which we pride ourselves, and that, along with "luck," guides us triumphantly through the business game, fails

of reverent handling by the psychologist. "Reasoning is an organization of images determined by the properties of the images alone; it suffices for the images to be put in presence and they become organized; reason follows with the certainty of a reflex," declares one authority. ". . . Thought is the verbal counterpart of active imagination," explains another. "Active imagination is thinking in images; thinking is active imagination carried on in words."[1]

As for relative values, one more quotation: "The three processes are different in that the results of reasoning are new and are accepted as true; the results of memory are true, but not new; and the results of imagination are new, but not true." Waiving the fact that no one of us is always certain to pursue one of these processes singly, and hence that we yield belief largely where we choose (the *wish* bogey once more!), let us place here the familiar dictum of Aristole that has to get in somewhere: Poetry has a higher truth than history. The records of history, must we say, are true but not new, while the imaginings of poets—say, Goethe, Browning, Masefield, Carlyle, and Hardy—are new and true also. True in the sense that imagination has selected out the more significant facts, has freed the ideas from abject dependence upon externality characteristic of sensations and perceptions and their mere

[1]An interesting comparison of the process of thinking with that of imagining is to be found in *A Primer of Psychology,* by E. B. Titchener, ed. 1907, p. 214-5. "The thinker comes to his subject-matter in the state of active attention; works over it, feature by feature; and finally reaches a verbal 'conclusion' as the result of the term of effort,—precisely as the painter faces his mass of image material, and produces his picture after a period of strenuous endeavor. . . . The difference between the word (the chief instrument of the thinker) and the image is that the latter is photographic, a copy of reality, while the former is symbolic, a sign of a reality which is wholly unlike itself. There is a close resemblance between the inventor's mental forecast of a machine and the actual machine; there is none between the word 'telephone' and the actual telephone. We must remember, however, that the earliest words were, in all probability, photographic—sound-images: it was only by slow degrees that the word acquired its symbolic character. . . . These facts help us to answer a very common question: the question whether we can 'think' without words. If we go back to the beginnings of thought, to the time when active imagination and thought were identical, we must answer yes,—active imaging can be done without words, and active imaging is the earliest kind of thought. If we take 'thought' in the narrower sense, the answer will be negative."

copies, and placed them in relationships more revealing and permanent than those of space and time.

Another chastening view of these psychologists is that in dreams we are always reasoning. If imagination is reasoning in images, and if we all reason in dreams of the day or night, how are we to be assured that the dreaming of poets is not sense and the reasoning of practical men nonsense? "Reasoning may thus be regarded as a synthesis of images suggested by resemblance and contiguity," says the scholar,[1] "indeed a sort of logical vision, more intense even than actual vision, since it is capable of producing hallucinations. To reasoning all forms of mental activity may finally be reduced; mind, as Wundt has said, is a thing that reasons."

The unconscious

We have thus sunk rather low—well toward the unconscious, in fact. Everybody has by this time imbibed in more or less adulterated form, or in a few cases in some finer distillation, the substance of Sigmund Freud's theory of wish and of impulsive thinking. We were already familiar with conceptions of the 'subliminal self' or the 'subconscious',—something, as one writer puts it, that existed and affected our awareness yet was not within the sphere of our awareness. Freud describes the 'unconscious' as those impressions, impulses, and desires which have settled or been thrust by our will into the part of our mental being that is not subject to the command of the will. What has been thrust down makes strange alliances, accumulates power, and tends to emerge in shifting guises. "These ever-moving and so to speak immortal wishes of our Unconscious," says Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams,* "remind us of the Titans, those crude earthy beings who opposed the gods and were by them buried under the mountains which still shake with their strivings."

What the Freudians make too little of is that not all the Titans were earth-born and god-destroying like Enceladus: there was Prometheus, who befriended man, fire-bringer and prophet of gods above the gods. Lowly origins do not stultify

[1]Havelock Ellis, *The World of Dreams,* 1916, p. 57.

nor stunt. That man's ancestor was Pithecanthropos, and his but coagulating ooze, should rather suggest what better thing man's child may be. That lust lies back of love only proves that before it lies a finer love. Out of racial wishes have come the myths (that were the beginnings of scientific hypothesis and law), with whatever gods there be. Out of personal wishes have sprung the fairy tales that demonstrate poetic justice and keep alive ideals that remake their makers.

Imaginative Freudism

We are to see how imagination proceeds, but I linger to record an imaginative reconception of the very postulates of Freudism. "This 'wish,' which as a concept Freud does not analyze, includes all that would commonly be so classed, and also whatever would be called impulse, tendency, desire, purpose, attitude, and the like; not including, however, any emotional components thereof. Freud also acknowledges the existence of what he calls 'negative wishes'; and these are not fears but negative purposes. An exact definition of the 'wish' is that it is *a course of action* which some mechanism of the body is *set* to carry out, whether it actually does so or not. . . . The wish is *any purpose or project for a course of action,* whether it is being merely entertained by the mind or is being actually executed; a distinction which is really of little importance. We shall do well if we consider this wish to be, as in fact it is, dependent on a *motor attitude* of the physical body, which goes over into overt action and *conduct* when the wish is carried into execution."[1]

It is to be expected that the general physical nature or a particular bodily craving or motor set may possess us with tendencies morally good and morally bad, practically expedient and practically inexpedient. Selfish and brutish wishes, let us say, inhere in germ-plasm, but socialized and ameliorative wishes can be cultivated in the individual by mental callisthenics. "These more rational wishes," explains Mr. Holt, "which in ordinary waking hours are strong enough to hold the morbid wish in abeyance, constitute the individual's recognized character. It is they, or the mechanisms that accompany them,

[1] *The Freudian Wish,* by Edwin B. Holt, Henry Holt & Co., 1916, pp. 3-4.

which need the recuperation of sleep; it is they which 'go to sleep.' Whereupon the wishes which have been held in idleness, and are therefore not fagged, are able to exercise themselves in opposition to the upper group.". . . . "A fearful dream is an exact counterpart on the plane of imagination of what only too often happens in actual waking life: a person's lower self 'gets the better of him,' he commits an evil deed, instantly 'comes to himself' again, and suffers an agony of remorse."[1]

So much for dreams, whether sleep-dreams or reveries. Dreams are dramas enacted by images—behind the back of a bespelled censor in dream proper; before a drowsy or complacent censor in day-dream or revery; and under the guidance of a vigilant and astute censor in artistic creation. The recorded drama—or song, or picture—becomes a positive force, imparting in turn the callisthenic beauty and strength. Or, if it was originally the uncensored work of a Caliban, it slavers the lip and loosens the reins of him who looks or listens; it may even, if he be suggestible and weak, lure him to the bacchanalia and the dance of death. Art itself is not moral nor immoral, but it is a touchstone and a challenge to what in us is life-enlarging or life-diminishing.

Dream made art

What has imagination to do with all this? Well, the 'secret' of flowing waters, Mr. Holt reminds us, is really not lower

[1] *The Freudian Wish*, pp. 13-15.
For the imaginative Freudian the unit of psychology is no longer a sensation, a 'content' of consciousness (which cannot exist even as a container until sensations get into it!) but the wish, a dynamic something that does not come from outside to be a content but is the expressiveness of body-mind. Mr. Holt boldly calls it soul: it is incarnated comprehensibly in body because it is what the body can do, is set to do, and wills to do. Wish and action are now more than a matter of discharges through reflex arcs, because wish contemplates something outside the body to which it tends to make adjustments. It is purpose with reference to environment, and it animates a body which would otherwise remain a mere mechanism. It involves awareness; its specific responses constitute behavior. It enables us to understand at last what thought or cognition is: mind is "integrated reflex behavior." ". . . History, biography, fiction, and the drama are all descriptions of what men do, of human behavior." Thought is only an aspect of doing, emotion only the sense of doing something or of being set for doing.

levels, but the center of the earth, or more exactly still, the attraction of masses. And so the secret of the countless particular drudgeries and knaveries, reckless ventures and heroic endurances, with all the mean pin-pickings and pin-prickings that a man goes through in a lifetime, is the attraction of a thing beyond the horizon—acquirement of wealth, influence, love, knowledge, perfection. Or again more exactly, each specific response and all the bodily and mental sets are expressions of a relation between the wishful self and completer being. And as the nature of being is activity ("Calm is not all, though calm is well!"), the secret of every little deed, of every cramped and partial existence, is a reflection of and casting toward ever more comprehensive activities, completer life. As if a sun-dial attempted spiritual synchronism with the solar aeons, or an aeolian harp sought to orchestrate the music of the spheres. Thus keyed to doing the impossible, and resolute to "rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves," men ask of the artist the predication of action. We have called this craving for story naive, but it is the conception, not the craving, that is so. Child and bee suck punily through tiny tubes, but their thirst is for all sweetness, all life.

5

Dream work

With what does the artist answer, and what is the nature of his activity? The more he taps the unconscious, yet adapts it to the needs of the conscious, the better he expresses self and mankind. The processes of poetizing and story-making in particular resemble the dreamwork in which playing child and scheming practical man alike indulge. When ideas supplied by memory link themselves swiftly under guidance of desire, we may contrive plans and seem to execute them, build sand-castles and utopias, conceive a farce or a romance, but these are likely to break at any point and shower their sparks in bizarre confusion. The elements are brought often into startling or amusing, but not into vital and revealing, relations. This indolent and capricious sporting with mind stuff is usually distinguished as passive imagination or fancy. When, on the other hand,

images and ideas are deliberately summoned, rejected or retained and rearranged under selective intelligence and the beneficently tyrannical will, we get coherent dramatizations that may be rounded off, resumed upon occasion, and developed to rational ends. This is the active or creative imagination that devises plans based in human nature and adapted to overcome foreseen obstacles; that constructs machinery to perform unprecedented labors; that correlates facts, leaps into hypothesis, discovers scientific law; that interprets history, and conceives new characters and the inevitable actions that reveal them in drama or novel. The congruity and harmony achieved in fancying are due to the dominating emotion, as a unity of divergent forms and discordant colors may be secured by atmosphere in painting. The effect is to divert, charm, entertain. But we are served more palpably and permanently by the imaginative embodiments of thought and emotion such as wireless telegraphy, a vast industrial organization, a demonstration of the nature of a fell disease, a history of mankind, the evolutionary theory, a portraiture by Carlyle or Rembrandt, a sonata by Beethoven, a novel by Tolstoi.

Creatures of fancy

It is when the will is careless or absent that fancy leads the revel. Too blessed with creature comforts, we may sit before the fire and let images flutter up and away like the flames. Then return visions out of the dead past that can never bury its dead; then we feel kisses "by hopeless fancy feigned on lips that are for others"; then we live more lives than the human span can compass. All this must be called passive imagining. The realities that condition our fully conscious existence are flouted or forgotten; associations too grotesque, extravagant, or enslaving to be tolerated by reason move us to madness or charm us to deeper dream. And in dreams we are at the mercy of whatever suggestions bodily sensations and reviving mental impressions may precipitate.

Yet to fancy as to active imagination we owe much of the pleasant play of life, and something of the good that comes from even a feigned realization of instinctive cravings. For it is fancy, the image-making process uncontrolled by reason

or will, that has long since created and now bequeaths to us that motley multitude of beings the thought of whom makes our children tiptoe into ferny woodlands or scurry past deserted hovels. In other lands and earlier times gods, devils, ghosts, and fairies conditioned the practice of life at every turn: pragmatically, they existed. And as for the uses of such monstrous or lovely phantasms, what would have saved mankind from despair had his dreams by day and by night brought him nothing that sober sense and hard fact could deny? Without the belief in guardian ancestral spirits the world of the savage would seem too dreadful to live in, while if there had been no conceivable fairy godmother or benignant Fortuna, must not many a denizen of nearer worlds have gone mad with solitary helplessness? Let us be thankful for these creatures of the moon-smitten human soul—for good fairy, friendly beast, and mother-spirit out of folklore, for Nemesis and valkyr, for interceding saints, and the angel at each tomb.

Passive imagination is thus more useful, as it is certainly more common, than we stop to think. The business man acts upon his 'hunch'; the mathematician finds his problem solved when he awakes one morning; the writer, long puzzled, finds suddenly that his plot has been completed, his character vitalized. The unconscious has afforded material or struck out a plan; we have then only to use the means with clear reference to our ends. Dream itself, with all its chance contiguities and irrational associations, may serve us unexpectedly in life or art.

Unabashed by the psychoanalysts, Mr. Havelock Ellis narrates some of his own dreams, one of which illustrates our point. ". . . I once, as a youth, had a vivid dream of an albatross that became transformed into a woman, the beautiful eyes of the albatross taking on a womanly expression, but the bird's beak only being imperfectly changed into a nose as the bird-woman murmured, 'Do you love me?' " This is like a few chords out of the Bird-Wife or Swan-Maiden story, declared by an eminent folklorist to be probably the most widely distributed of traditional wish-tales. We may smile at such visions and forget them, but any contriver of plots or re-

vealer of personality, especially if fond of symbolism or inclined to search out the drift of inarticulate human nature, can take such a theme and elaborate a story.

Another fact to note: dream and revery alike may result in illusion, so lifelike does their image-play appear. By the dream process stimulated by wish, primitive man wrought his myths, conceived some lesser Prometheus, Manitou, or Madonna, and equipped a dim Valhalla, Elysium, or Paradise to compensate for life and death. A child of our own, though "heir of all the ages"—more truly, because he is that—is not always to be reprimanded for what we call his lies, white and black. He is determined day in and day out by prohibitions and urgencies of inexplicable elders; he throbs and reaches out from moment to moment with desires than can be but partially and fitfully gratified; he imagines fulfilment. Fumbling hungrily, he springs the catch of fancy, and the genie rises from its box to promise miracles at price of strange conformities. The child knows no spell to shrink the cloudy demon to its prison, nor the seal of Solomon—some graving of the fruit of the tree of knowledge—to seal it within. The genie looms and fades and looms again, leading him whither it will, but never into worlds more strange than this of grown-ups. For the child there are no incredibilities nor impossibilities. And something more than fool's gold may be brought back. Even when the inventive youngster can be faced with solid but uninspiring fact, it may not be wise to check him, for exceptional children at least may in their rich dream life of sleep and waking gather a store of material or acquire a discipline that shall one day be intelligently addressed to artistic ends, and spiritual.[1]

Illusion

[1]The dire temptations of the fanciful child may be realized through the following anecdote related by a student. "Mamma, mamma!" called four-year-old Charlie, bursting into the house one morning, "there was a big black bird out by the woodshed, an' he chased me, too. But I runned as fast as I could an' got away. He was a great big black bird!" "Now, Charles, are you *sure* that a big black bird chased you?" Thus pinned down, the boy looked crestfallen. "Well, Mamma," he said slowly, "there wsa a hole out there that was bigger 'n a rat hole, *an' a big black bird was goin' to come out of it an' chase me!*"

Child artists

That fancies which take rhythmic flight in child minds are sometimes already art has in recent years found abundant proof. We have often wondered what dear Marjorie Fleming, the child that Walter Scott so delighted in, might have become in later years. But her delicious letters, verses and confessions ended with her death at the age of eight, and though she was perfectly normal in mind and body we have inclined to regard her as wholly exceptional. However, the child artist is now recognized among us—though several young persons published as such are dull and ordinary to a degree. We have seen exhibitions, and sales, of the colored drawings of Miss Pamela Bianco (accumulating since her fifth year), drawings that inspired the verses of Mr. Walter de la Mare that appear in *Flora.* There are also to be seen copies of the pen-drawings of animals and men in the full heave of life, so vigorously executed, from memory, by young Romano Dazzi. In 1919 we were reading the naively sophisticated *Young Visiters* composed by Miss Daisy Ashford when she was but nine, and a year later the *Poems by a Little Girl,* produced by Miss Hilda Conkling before her tenth year. Young Dazzi showed a sort of vigorous maturity from the first; Miss Bianco has turned recently to expressionistic work entirely different from what she began with; Miss Conkling has published lately *Shoes of the Wind,* in the first vein, which is truly and deeply poetic. These young people have reinterpreted the world that to us is commonplace; they have plumbed the under-ocean, let us say, and found there sea-bloom and coral palaces, stones that break their silence, oysters that "mend their shell with pearl," and mermaid-mothers whose beauties do not fade with years. We cannot afford to discourage fancyings like these, that may soon eventuate in mature imagination.

Classification of imagination

We may be content as heretofore to think only of reproductive or passive, and productive or active and creative imagination, according as the one process is or is not dominated by attention and will. Yet in connection with literature in particular it may be helpful to note the

classification once suggested by Mr. Winchester.[1] "Creative imagination" is for him the coordination of the isolated facts of life on the basis of vital and illuminating relations, and the building of hitherto scattered elements into new wholes. "Associative imagination" presents its object, image, or theme in company with images that are congruously evocative of emotion: they echo and reinforce the central feeling or idea. "Interpretative imagination" consists in the suggestion of spiritual significance in the dominant object by emphasis upon a characteristic feature. When the relationships built upon or the ends desired are of merely individual, transitory, or capricious nature we have fancy in the particular kind.

Japanese poetry

We may waive the matter of creative imagination and fancy, already sufficiently in view through our allusions to many world-famous art works on the one hand and to the figures of folklore and revery on the other. Illustration of the other forms may be found and analyzed nowhere more delightfully than in the sallies of Japanese verse. The poet Edwin Markham once improvised for me this (less rigid) *tanka*:

> The shadow of the crane glides over the glass
> Of the husht lake and vanishes in shadow.

And John Gould Fletcher has achieved what may be called the *hokku,* as here:

> A poet's moods:
> Fluttering butterflies in the rain.

Even Carl Sandburg subdues his hammer-muscles to this miniaturing:

> The fog comes
> On little cat feet.
> It sits looking
> Over harbor and city
> On silent haunches,
> And then moves on.

One feels at once the fascination of such experiments: the thirty-one-syllabled *tanka* and the seventeen-syllabled *hokku* are extraordinarily adapted for the expression of flashing perception and intuition, or the break of some seventh wave of

[1] C. T. Winchester, *Some Principles of Literary Criticism,* Macmillan, 1899, chap. 4.

emotion upon a promontory of individual experience. One tries for oneself:

> Full moon above wind-carven snow,
> And moon-cast shadow of a winging owl,
> That veins the marble silence.
> In my soul,
> A thought too chill to wing.

But that is too sophisticated: a Japanese poet tells us that the native poetry "never aches." Otherwise one would describe such forms in Tennysonian phrase:

> Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
> Their wings in tears, and skim away.

After all, the spirit of man and what he thinketh in his heart refuse to be straitly syllabled.[1]

[1]The most successful imitations of Japanese poetry have been those of Adelaide Crapsey, John Gould Fletcher, and Amy Lowell. The animating spirit of the original has been suggested by Yone Noguchi (Japanese Poets and Poetry," *Outlook*, 125:325-7): ". . . When our great poets of Japan write only of the shiver of a tree or a flower, of a single isolated aspect of nature, that means that they are singing of infinity from its accidental revelation." He finds Wordsworth thus treating celandine, daisy, and daffodils, and calls him "the first Easterner of English literature." "The Japanese poet's chief aim," he continues, "is to impress readers with the high atmosphere in which he is living." He quotes the following:

> *Osoki hi ni*
> *Tsumori te toki*
> *Mukashi kana*

and translates:

> *Slow-passing days*
> *Gathered, gathering.*
> *Alas, past, far-away, distant!*

A writer in the *Dial* (61:43-45) offers us "the original of a most admired *hokku*":

> *Asagawo ni*
> *Tsurube torarete*
> *Morai mizu.*

His literal rendering is:

> The well-bucket taken away
> By the morning-glory:
> Alas, water to beg!

Only one more quotation, to show the characteristic self-restraint—a mother thus laments her boy who has died:

> The hunter of dragon-flies,
> Today how far away
> May he have gone!

6

Imagination in common life

It is clear by this time that the exercise of imagination is normal, but it may still seem that we have dealt with only exceptional individuals. Well, the farmer who at some October sundown leaves the last chores to the hired man and leans musingly upon the orchard fence is beleaguered with sensations. He gazes beyond the stubble field at the great shocks of corn, the bivouac of the year, dimming in lowland mist. His breath comes sweet with the smell of apples. Half-consciously he hears the tinkle of sheepbells that falls into the pulsing cricket chorus like fountain spray into a pool. Memories of past autumns throng upon him, and glimmering visions of seasons to come, conditioned happily by this. He seems to watch the grain streaming from next month's threshing; even the money it will bring is slipped into his palm. He spends the money, too, in his day-dream, for the boy's schooling, for the daughter's independence, perhaps also for the California trip that he and the wife have long promised themselves. A hoot-owl chuckles in the walnut tree; a light gleams from the sitting-room window upon the woodbine. The man waves back the playing images and goes softly whistling toward the house.

And perhaps the very girl who has set the lamp upon the table and laid the town paper to her father's hand will in some later year because of his labor and his dreams travel farther across the world than he had thought of doing. Was not her great-grandfather a Welshman? She will find herself then in the summer of her foreign tour swinging down into the Wye valley toward the border of Wales. The uplands are fragrant with clover; the skylarks wing and sing like the bobolinks at home. She turns with a catch of breath to behold below her that perfect ruin, Tintern Abbey, named for her by Wordsworth, and fit to echo with his cuckoo's twofold shout. Within the walls, at length, she is reminded that here Tennyson once stood and composed "Tears, Idle Tears." She hears again the rimeless rime:

> Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean;
> Tears from the depth of some divine despair
> Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
> In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
> And thinking of the days that are no more.

Through tears, she sees her father, gazing on the fields he left her, and knows that he was as truly, though not so exquisitely, imaginative as the English poets. One has but to keep on straight across the world to arrive at last back home.

A tale by Björnson

There is a well-known tale by the Norwegian Björnson, called "The Father," brief and strong as a biblical parable, that shows what art can do with human clay. There are but two 'speaking parts': those of the masterful peasant Thord and the quiet priest to whom at long intervals he turns for benefit of clergy. First, we hear Thord, proud but laconic, arrange for the baptism of his son. Years pass, and the son is to be confirmed, at the head of his class. Again, the son is to be betrothed to the richest girl in the parish. As before, the fee of the priest is overpaid. "This is now the third time, Thord, that you have come here on your son's account." "But now I am through with him," said Thord, knowing as yet nothing of the irony of life. Of the community, of Thord's wife, of the boy's growth and his wooing, of the father's thrifty scheming, we are told nothing. Even the priest who gives the due official sanctions, and follows with the quiet question, "Is there anything else?" draws naught from Thord for us. Then just before the projected wedding, while father and son are returning across the lake, the youth loses balance, falls overboard, is drowned. For three days and nights the father dragged the lake, until he found the body.

It was a year later that Thord fumbled at the latch of the priest's door. He laid half the price of his farm upon the table, saying, "It is for the poor—a legacy in my son's name." "It is a great sum," said the priest. Then gently: "What do you propose to do now, Thord?" "Something better." Presently the priest said: "I think your son has at last brought you a true blessing." "Yes, I think so myself," said Thord, look-

ing up while two big tears coursed slowly down his cheeks.[1]

In the making of a tale so simple as this, many people would say, the imagination has no part. If it isn't all true, they observe, it might be—it is a chronicle of the crises in the life of a typical man. Even so, it should be remembered, there must have been in Thord's life-story a thousand crucial instances, while the narrator has sketched but these few. We ourselves, when trying to make the character of some old friend briefly but truly known to another, must depend not so much upon memory of all our friend has done as upon selection of his significant doings and refusings, and most of all upon a sympathetic interpretation of these. Such selecting of the characteristic, such grouping in the light of a central trait or of one's own purpose, is not simple, and it is art. A man's week-day and Sabbath doings, his conventional or erratic talk, his acquisitions and squanderings, even his sacrifices and honors and dishonors, carry not universally recognizable marks of relative interest, to say nothing of relative value. And after the materials at hand have been sifted and weighed as by a Wordsworth, a Hawthorne, a Balzac, through what form-giving and marshalling can they be made impressive to persons hitherto indifferent?

Imaginative realism

Of all the people concerned with the events we regard as of main importance, which are to be represented? How much of their lives shall here be revealed? In our daily encounters we find that even the taciturn and the wise will talk too much and too foolishly. What then shall the personages of our little history be allowed to say? What will they inevitably say? As for the things they are to do—the testimony of eye-witnesses to actual events leaves us uncertain what happened and with what cause and significance. The most conscientious chronicler must therefore approximate and infer.

Then suppose, what is usually the case, that so apparently authentic a story as "The Father" is not the record of an actual series of happenings in the life of an actual man. In the case of almost any narrative we are likely to find that char-

[1]A translation of "The Father" is included in *The Short-Story*, edited by Brander Matthews, American Book Co., 1907.

acters taken from life have been reconceived, and others created; and that to all have been ascribed imaginary experiences to the end of meeting the capacities, dispositions, and desires of us who read. Finally, the persons and actions to be found in stories such as those of Björnson, Maupassant, or Tolstoi, of Maeterlinck, O. Henry, or Sinclair Lewis, will be represented with brotherly sympathy or cynical detachment, with romantic or whimsical exaggeration, with deceptive impartiality or with fanatic ardor of praise or blame. Some instinctive bent of the author will be illustrated, some theme embodied, some philosophy of life expressed. The alleged facts are chosen, colored, and moulded to realize purposes conscious or unconscious. Naught but imagination can do all this, and the exercise of imagination cannot be avoided.

7

The typical artist

If one would study the typical and self-confessed artist, one cannot do better than turn to Sir James Barrie. His Peter Pan and Babbie, his Crichton, Sentimental Tommy, and anguishing beloved Grizel, are all as real and inexplicable as the members of one's own household—and yet they sum up to the possible Barrie. No characters in history or fiction, to speak strictly, can have been formed out of any substance other than the mind-stuff of their chroniclers. Here is proof enough of the universality of multiple personality. But read Barrie as self-portrayed and call him the typical artist. Warm heart and nimble wit; childlike grave perceptiveness; inconsequent logic and unerring waywardness; creative abundance and insatiate soul; ironic sweetness, teasing lovableness—these make Barrie's creatures and they make himself.

How a being that shall grow into a Barrie lives and works his wonders may be seen in *Sentimental Tommy*,—from which, one passage. Dominie Cathro, the jealous and canny schoolmaster, had been wont to gather in extra pennies for writing letters for his unlettered neighbors. At length, and suddenly, the revenues diminished, but no one would confess to him that the rival scribe was his most hated pupil, Tommy Sandys.

"At least twice a year the Dominie had written for Meggy Duff to her daughter in Ireland a long letter founded on this suggestion: 'Dear Kaytherine, if you dinna send ten shillings immediately, your puir auld mother will have neither house nor hame. I'm crying to you for't, Kaytherine; hearken and you'll hear my cry across the cauldriff sea!' He met Meggy in the Banker's Close one day, and asked her pleasantly if the time was not drawing nigh for another appeal.

" 'I have wrote,' replied the old woman, giving her pocket a boastful smack, which she thus explained: 'And it was the whole ten shillings this time, and you never got more for me than five.' . . . .

"It is interesting to know what Tommy wrote. . . . . The letter he despatched to Ireland, but had the wisdom not to read aloud even to Meggy, contained nothing save her own words: 'Dear Kaytherine, if you dinna send ten shillings immediately, your puir auld mother will have neither house nor hame. I'm crying to you for't, Kaytherine: hearken and you'll hear my cry across the cauldriff sea.' It was a call from the heart which transported Katherine to Thrums in a second of time; she seemed to see her mother again, grown frail since last they met, and so all was well for Meggy. Tommy did not put all this to himself but he felt it, and after that he *could not* have written the letter differently. Happy Tommy! to be an artist is a great thing, but to be an artist and not know it is the most glorious plight in the world."

The dreams of genius

To conclude with a scientific opinion or two. "Finally," asserts Havelock Ellis, "it may be observed that the atmosphere into which genius leads us, and indeed all art, is the atmosphere of the world of dreams. The man of genius, it is often said, has the child within him; he is, according to the ancient dictum, which is still accepted, not without an admixture of insanity, and he is unquestionably related to the primitive myth-maker." But why, with what we call their irrationalities, do the creations of imaginative men thrill us with delight, seem to shine into the mysteries of existence, draw us nearer to all men, claim us for sonship to God? It seems to me that John Dewey suggested the answer when

he declared the sole basis of creative imagination to be "the fundamental unity between man and man and between man and nature." According to this view, there is posited in a deeply imaginative work a universality of humanity and an organic relationship of man with nature. Certainly, biology itself sanctions the latter notion, and quite as certainly the humanity that flowers out of nature is potential everywhere.

If all this seems not merely metaphysical, but fanciful, let us resort frankly to analogy. Every science sails upon assumptions. Let us say it is like a cunningly contrived, fully equipped, well captained and piloted ship afloat upon what may be bottomless nothing so far as the ship's instruments show. There may be theorists aboard to reassure captain and passengers with regard to the nature of being, the nature of knowledge and the knower, and to explain how the good ship Cosmos was built, what are the ethics of captaincy and stokery, even what are the aesthetics of turbines and decoration, champagne and philandering. But there must not be too many theorists, else there will be unphilosophical disagreement, and the souls aboard ship will be happy only in proportion as they fail to comprehend what the pundits say. Better let the simple and imaginative man, then, poke about engine room and stoke-hole, study the wistfulness of the steerage after the pride of the first cabin, watch some bird that flits about the rigging and is gone again, talk with the ship's doctor, hear the plash of a leaded body and the sob of a prayer, and gaze upward to moon and pole-star, indifferent yet compelling. He will seek utterance at last, and it will behoove men to listen when he says his say in whatever form a Dauber can.

APPENDIX

TOLSTOI ON ART

The criticism of Shakespeare by Tolstoi is but a particular application of the ethical-aesthetic theory published by the latter in the late 90's under title *What Is Art?*. The standard translation, that of Mr. Aylmer Maude, was published by Walter Scott, London, 1899, and to this edition I refer. In order that the Shakespeare criticism may be properly evaluated and that those interested in Tolstoi may consider his critical theories free from undue influence, I subjoin a fragmentary outline of *What Is Art?* in close abstract and wherever feasible in quotation.

The waste of money, time, and labor upon the production of various kinds of art; the fundamental assumption that all works of art, being more or less richly freighted with "beauty," are worth all they cost, while the unbilled items of the cargoes, such as fantasticality, untruth, sensuality, and irreligion, are negligible to philosopher and aesthete and welcome to the common sense enjoyer—these are the matters first dilated upon. And nowhere does Tolstoi deal in inference and generalization merely: he heaps up concrete facts which in his own judgment warrant all his conclusions and which must often by the candid reader be accepted as decisive.

A summarizing of the theories of the beautiful in the principal European countries from the time of Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762), regarded as the founder of aesthetics as a science, to that of Taine, Spencer, and Knight, is the next undertaking. The conclusion is: "There is and can be no explanation of why one thing pleases one man and displeases another, or *vice versa*. So that the whole existing science of aesthetics fails to do what we might expect from it, being a mental activity calling itself a science, namely, it does not define the qualities and laws of art, or of the beautiful (if that be the content of art), or the nature of taste (if taste decides the question of art and its merit), and then, on the basis of such definitions, acknowledge as art those productions which correspond to these laws, and reject those which do not come under them. But this science of aesthetics consists in first acknowledging a certain set of productions to be art (because they please us), and then framing such a theory of art that all these productions which please a certain circle of people should fit into it. There exists an art canon, according to which certain productions favored by our circle are acknowledged as being art,—Phidias, Sophocles, Homer, Titian, Raphael, Bach, Beethoven, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and others, —and the aesthetic laws must be such as to embrace all these productions." (*What Is Art?* p. 41.)

"To see the aim and purpose of art in the pleasure we get from it, is like assuming (as is done by people of the lowest moral development, *e. g.*, by savages) that the purpose and aim of food is the pleasure derived when consuming it." (p. 43.) No satisfactory definition of art has been attained where the conception of art has been based on the conception of beauty. (p. 45.) What may be called the biological definitions, which look to the origins of art in sex and play, and which evaluate it as a life-serving function, are found inadequate in that they also make a certain kind of pleasure-giving the characteristic aim of art. (pp. 46-47.)

"In order correctly to define art, it is necessary, first of all, to cease to consider it as a means to pleasure, and to consider it as one of the conditions of human life. Viewing it in this way, we cannot fail to observe that art is one of the means of intercourse between man and man. Every work of art causes the receiver to enter into a certain kind of relationship both with him who produced, or is producing, the art, and with all those who, simultaneously, previously, or subsequently, receive the same artistic impression. Speech, transmitting the thoughts and experiences of men, serves as a means of union among them, and art acts in a similar manner. The peculiarity of this latter means of intercourse, distinguishing it from intercourse by means of words, consists in this, that whereas by words a man transmits his thoughts to another, by means of art he transmits his feelings. The activity of art is based on the fact that a man, receiving through his sense of hearing or sight another man's expression of feeling, is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it. .... And it is on this capacity of man to feel another man's expression of feeling, and experience those feelings himself, that the activity of art is based.

"If a man infects another or others, directly, immediately, by his appearance, or by the sounds he gives vent to at the very time he experiences the feeling; if he causes another man to yawn when he himself cannot help yawning, or to laugh or cry when he himself is obliged to laugh or cry, or to suffer when he himself is suffering —that does not amount to art.

"Art begins when one person, with the object of joining another or others to himself in one and the same feeling, expresses that feeling by certain external indications. (Chapter V, pp. 46-48.)

"To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art."

"Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them." (p. 50.)

The artistic impulse naturally expresses itself in the manifold natural constructions familiar to all and making life livable. But in sophisticated discussions the term art is applied only to a certain few activities or productions that give pleasure to an upper or a specially cultured class. "... We think the feelings experienced by people of our day and our class are very important and varied: but in reality almost all the feelings of people of our class amount to but three very insignificant and simple feelings—the feeling of pride, the feeling of sexual desire, and the feeling of weariness of life. These three feelings, with their outgrowths, form almost the only subject-matter of the art of the rich classes." (Chapter IX, p. 76.)

Chapter X is devoted to an exposition, with abundant quotation, of modern, and particularly of French art. The poets and novelists of the Decadence are arraigned, with the Symbolists, the Impressionists, and the Neo-Impressionists among painters,—more on the charge of artificiality, insincerity, and obscurity than on that of immorality. Tolstoi says he himself can not understand this art, and so is moved by it only with weariness and disgust: still more, he asserts, would it be dark and dull to the masses of mankind.

If the answer is that the best works of art are supposed to be accessible only to the elect, Tolstoi retorts that if men in general lack the knowledge that would bring appreciation, it should be given them. "But it turns out that there is no such knowledge, that the works cannot be explained, and that those who say the majority do not understand good works of art, still do not explain those works, but only tell us that, in order to understand them, one must read, and see, and hear these same works over and over again. But this is not to explain, it is only to habituate! And people may habituate themselves to anything, even to the very worst things. As people may habituate themselves to bad food, to spirits, tobacco, and opium, just in the same way they may habituate themselves to bad art—and that is exactly what is being done." (p. 101.)

But the majority have always understood works that we also place among the greatest: "...The epic of Genesis, the Gospel parables, folk-legends, fairy-tales, and folk-songs are understood by all." [It may be remarked that truth and morality as expressed in folk-literature in general deserved a closer scrutiny from Tolstoi!]

The Chinese language, Tolstoi goes on, we do not understand, hence an excellent speech in that language would not move us. But Chinese art is in the universal language, and so reaches all of us. "The songs of a Kirghiz or of a Japanese touch me, though in a

lesser degree than they touch a Kirghiz or a Japanese. I am also touched by Japanese painting, Indian architecture, and Arabian stories. If I am but little touched by a Japanese song and a Chinese novel, it is not that I do not understand these productions, but that I know and am accustomed to higher works of art. It is not because their art is above me. Great works of art are only great because they are accessible and comprehensible to everyone. The story of Joseph, translated into the Chinese language, touches a Chinese. The story of Sakya Muni touches us." So-called art that fails to move the masses of men is either bad art, or not art at all. (pp. 101-2.)

The acquirement of science, or of any sort of knowledge, involves preparation and a sequential advance from the known into the unknown, but a composition of sounds, colors, or emotionally related images, may infect any man regardless of his intellectual discipline or reasoning power. "The business of art lies just in this—to make that understood and felt which, in the form of an argument, might be incomprehensible and inaccessible. Usually it seems to the recipient of a truly artistic impression that he knew the thing before but had been unable to express it. ... A good and lofty work of art may be incomprehensible, but not to simple, unperverted peasant laborers (all that is highest is understood by them) —it may be, and often is, unintelligible to erudite, perverted people destitute of religion. ... I know people who consider themselves most refined, and who say that they do not understand the poetry of love to one's neighbor, of self-sacrifice, or of chastity." (pp. 102-3.)

Upper-class art has nowadays become imitative, or completely counterfeit. Artists, to satisfy upper-class demands, have found various methods of producing imitations of art. These methods are those of (1) borrowing, (2) realistic imitation, (3) striving for striking effects, and (4) seeking factitious interest (Chapter XI).

(1): Sometimes only certain admired features, at other times whole subjects, are borrowed, and reshaped and regarbed for the hour. This is especially evident in subjects and forms regarded as poetical. An example of such art is Rostand's *Princesse Lontaine*.

(2): "The essence of this method consists in supplying details accompanying the thing described or depicted. In literary art this method consists in describing, in the minutest details, the external appearance, the faces, the clothes, the gestures, the tones, and the habitations of the characters represented, with all the occurrences met with in life. ... In dramatic art, besides such imitation of real speech, this method consists in having all the accessories and all the people just like those in real life. In painting, this method assimilates painting to photography and destroys the difference between them. And, strange to say, this method is used also in music: music

tries to imitate not only by its rhythm but also by its very sounds, the sounds which in real life accompany the thing it wishes to represent." (pp. 108-9.) Such realism (Tolstoi uses the word) has not art-quality: it even hinders the transmission of feeling.

(3): "The third method is by action, often purely physical, on the outer senses. Work of this kind is said to be 'striking,' 'effectful'." It relies largely upon contrasts of all sorts; but also upon the description or representation of objects which good taste and common sense alike have hitherto rejected: the diseased, the abnormally erotic, the discordant, the gortesque. Each particular art finds its peculiar provocatives, but in one attempt they all agree: "namely, to convey by means of one art what it would be natural to convey by another: for instance, to make music describe (as is done by the programme music of Wagner and his followers), or to make painting, the drama, or poetry, induce a frame of mind (as is aimed at by all Decadent art)." (p. 110.)

(4): Absorbing or intriguing the mind of the observer in the work of art. "For example, in a novel, interestingness may consist in a description of Egyptian or Roman life, the life of miners, or that of clerks in a large shop. The reader becomes interested and mistakes this interest for an artistic impression." Sometimes the trick is that of frankly offering a riddle to be solved. (p. 110.) Mental preoccupation and puzzlement interfere with artistic infection.

That a man may produce a real work of art: "It is necessary that he should stand on the level of the highest life-conception of his time, that he should experience feeling and have the desire and capacity to transmit it, and that he should, moreover, have a talent for some one of the forms of art." (p. 114.) But for producing counterfeits, there are recipes and formulas which any cunning fellow can learn—and Tolstoi sketches some.

The art produced by such men as the Hebrew Prophets, the authors of the Psalms, St. Francis of Assisi, the authors of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* of folk-tales and folk-songs, sprang from natural ability and the impulse to express noble emotion. Counterfeit art is produced by professionals. (Chapter XII, pp. 118-19.) It is diffused with the help of *professional critics*: art is not to be evaluated by plain men. The critics pretend to explain. But what should they explain? "If a work be good as art, then the feeling expressed by the artist—be it moral or immoral—transmits itself to other people. If transmitted to others, then they feel it, and all interpretations are superfluous. If the work does not infect people, no explanation can make it contagious." The artist expresses himself in his particular medium and in the particular form of *this work*: no other form will express him or his peculiar theme. "Interpretation" is impossible.

The critics seek a criterion of judgment and taste, and the best they find is "the judgments of the finest-nurtured." But these are often mistaken, and obviously they disagree with one another. Still the critics accumulate precedents and wall themselves about with tradition. "A man produces a work of art, like every true artist expressing in his own peculiar manner a feeling he has experienced. Most people are infected by the artist's feeling; and his work becomes known. Then criticism, discussing the artist, says that the work is not bad, but all the same the artist is not a Dante, nor a Shakespeare, nor a Goethe, nor a Raphael, nor what Beethoven was in his last period. And the young artist sets to work to copy those who are held up for his imitation, and he produces not only feeble works, but false works, counterfeits of art." (pp. 120-21.)

The striving for new effects has resulted in such *confusion of the arts* as Wagnerian music. "Wagner wishes to correct the opera by letting music submit to the demands of poetry and unite with it. But each art has its own definite realm, which is not identical with the realm of other arts, but merely comes in contact with them; and therefore, if the manifestation of, I will not say several, but even of two arts—the dramatic and the musical—be united in one production, then the demands of the one art will make it impossible to fulfill the demands of the other, as has always occurred in the ordinary operas, where the dramatic art has submitted to, or rather yielded place to, the musical. Wagner wishes that musical art should submit to dramatic art, and that both should appear in full strength. But this is impossible, for every work of art, if it be a true one, is an expression of intimate feelings of the artist, which are quite exceptional, and not like anything else. ... If poetry and music may be joined, as occurs in hymns, songs, and romances ... this occurs only because lyrical poetry and music have, to some extent, one and the same aim: to produce a mental condition, and the conditions produced by lyrical poetry and by music can, more or less, coincide. But even in these conjunctions the centre of gravity always lies in one of the two productions, so that it is one of them that produces the artistic impression while the other remains unregarded. And still less is it possible for such union to exist between epic or dramatic poetry and music." (pp. 129-130.) Moreover, freedom from all preconceived demand is essential to the success of an artist, and the exigencies of adjusting say a musical composition to a poetical precludes spontaneous and original work and gives us counterfeit art such as melodrama, libretto, and illustration. (Chapter XIII.)

Mere arbitrariness is to be seen in Wagner's use of the *leit-motif* —a chord or combination of tones supposed to symbolize, suggest, or represent a Siegfried, a sword, a ring, a gnome, or fire. Music cannot thus represent an object or its character.

"There is one indubitable indication distinguishing real art from its counterfeit, namely, the infectiousness of art. If a man, without exercising effort and without altering his standpoint, on reading, hearing, or seeing another man's work, experiences a mental condition which unites him with that man and with other people who also partake of that work of art, then the object evoking that condition is a work of art." (Chapter XV, p. 152.)

"*The stronger the infection the better is the art, as art,* speaking now apart from its subject-matter, *i. e.* not considering the quality of the feelings it transmits. And the degree of the infectiousness of art depends on three conditions:—(1) On the greater or lesser individuality of the feeling transmitted; (2) on the greater or lesser clearness with which the feeling is transmitted; (3) on the sincerity of the artist, *i. e.* on the greater or lesser force with which the artist himself feels the emotion he transmits." (p. 153.) Sincerity is the greatest of the three essential qualities.

The goodness or the badness of art is determined by its subject-matter. (Chapter XVI.) Art is the concrete expression of feelings that unite all men. "And only two kinds of feeling do unite all men: first, feelings flowing from the perception of our sonship to God and of the brotherhood of man; and next, the simple feelings of common life, accessible to everyone without exception—such as the feeling of merriment, of pity, of cheerfulness, of tranquility, etc. Only these two kinds of feelings can now supply material for art good in its subject-matter." (p. 164.)

The Christian art of our time is of two kinds: "(1) art transmitting feelings flowing from a religious perception of man's position in the world in relation to God and to his neighbor—*religious art* in the limited meaning of the term; and (2) art transmitting the simplest feelings of common life, but such, always, as are accessible to all men in the whole world—the art of common life—the art of a people—*universal art.* Only these two kinds of art can be considered good art in our time." (p. 166.)

Examples of modern art of the first kind are: *Les Miserables* by Hugo; *A Tale of Two Cities* by Dickens; *Uncle Tom's Cabin; Adam Bede* by George Eliot; Dostoievsky's works. Examples of the second kind are harder to find, because modern works tend to present feelings of exceptional nature, to multiply details of time and place, and to be meagre in subject-matter as compared with, say, the story of Joseph. *David Copperfield* by Dickens; some tales by Gogol, and a few by Maupassant, approximate the requirements. In music, among the very few examples are Bach's famous violin aria, Chopin's nocturne in E flat major, and parts of compositions by Hadyn, Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven.

"I must, moreover, mention that I consign my own artistic productions to the category of bad art, excepting the story 'God Sees the Truth,' which seeks a place in the first class, and 'The Prisoner of the Caucasus,' which belongs to the second." (p. 170 note.)

The two organs of human progress are language and art. (Chapter XVII.) The consequences of the perverted activity of the organ art are chiefly: (1) waste of labor and even of life; (2) extravagant amusement for the rich; (3) perplexity of simple folk and children—the success of bad art makes them bewildered, or bitter, or induces them to mould themselves to wrong standards in art and life; (4) beauty—that which gives a sensuous pleasure—is placed above goodness, as in Oscar Wilde and the Decadents generally; (5) last and worst, the bad art now dominant infects men with the most baneful feelings: superstition, nationalism, and above all, sensuality.

"The task for art to accomplish is to make that feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbor, now attained only by the best members of the society, the customary feeling and the instinct of all men. By evoking, under imaginary conditions, the feeling of brotherhood and love, religious art will train men to experience those same feelings under similar circumstances in actual life; it will lay in the souls of men the rails along which the actions of those whom art thus educates will naturally pass. And universal art, by uniting the most different people in one common feeling, by destroying separation, will educate people to union, will show them, not by reason but by life itself, the joy of universal union reaching beyond the bounds set by life." (Chapter XX, p. 211.)

ARISTOTLE ON PLOT AND CHARACTER

INTERPRETED BY PROFESSOR BUTCHER

Critics of the story and the drama, and not a few story-writers and dramatists, have studied with profit and yet with some perplexity certain famous passages in the *Poetics* of Aristotle. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers, I quote from the translation of Professor S. H. Butcher in his *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, 1911:

Poetics ch. vi—"Again, Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these—thought and character—are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends. Hence, the Plot is the imitation of the action:—for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents. By Character I mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents. Thought is required wherever a statement is proved, or, it may be, a general truth enunciated.

"But most important of all [the parts of a Greek tragedy] is the structure of the incidents. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character. . . . Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents. Besides which, the most powerful elements of emotional interest in Tragedy—Peripeteia or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition scenes—are parts of the plot. A further proof is, that novices in the art attain to finish of diction and precision of portraiture before they can construct the plot.

Poetics ch. vii—"Now, according to our definition, Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Poetics ch. viii—"Unity of plot does not, as some persons think, consist in the unity of the hero. For infinitely various are the inci-

dents in one man's life which cannot be reduced to unity; and so, too, there are many actions of one man out of which we cannot make one action. . . . As, therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole.

Poetics ch. ix—"It is, moreover, evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the [tragic] poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen,—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history; for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is—for example—what Alcibiades did or suffered.

"But again, Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events inspiring fear or pity. Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effect. The tragic wonder will then be greater than if they happened of themselves or by accident; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design.

Poetics ch. x—"Plots are either simple or complex, for the actions in real life, of which the plots are an imitation, obviously show a similar distinction. An action which is one and continuous in the sense above defined, I call Simple, when the change of fortune takes place without Reversal of the Situation and without Recognition.

"A Complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal, or by Recognition, or by both. These last should arise from the internal structure of the plot, so that what follows should be the necessary or probable result of the preceding action. It makes all the difference whether any given event is a case of *propter hoc* or *post hoc*.

Poetics ch. xi—"Reversal of the Situation is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity. . . . Recognition, as the name indicates,

is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune. The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal of the Situation, as in the *Oedipus*. . . . Two parts, then, of the Plot—Reversal of the Situation and Recognition—turn upon surprises.

Poetics ch. xxiii—"As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single metre [*i e.*, Epic], the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be."

Professor Butcher devotes a chapter to "'Imitation' as an Aesthetic Term," explaining particularly that with Aristotle "imitation" does not mean "copying nature." "The artist may 'imitate things *as they ought to be*' (*Poetics* xxv): he may place before him an unrealized ideal," says Butcher (p. 122). In fact, aesthetic "imitation" is not of nature in the limited sense at all. "The actual objects of aesthetic imitation are threefold—ἤθη, πάθη, πράξεις. By ἤθη are meant the characteristic moral qualities, the permanent dispositions of the mind, which reveal a certain condition of the will: πάθη are the more transient emotions, the passing moods of feeling: πράξεις are actions in their proper and inward sense. An act viewed merely as an external process or result, one of a series of outward phenomena, is not the true object of aesthetic imitation. The πράξεις that art seeks to reproduce is mainly an inward process, a psychical energy working outwards; deeds, incidents, events, situations, being included under it so far as these spring from an inward act of will, or elicit some activity of thought or feeling (pp. 122-3)."

"Here lies the explanation of the somewhat startling phrase used in the *Poetics*, ch. ii, that 'men in action' are the objects imitated by the fine arts:—by all, and not merely by dramatic or narrative poetry where action is more obviously represented. Everything that expresses the mental life, that reveals a rational personality, will fall within this larger sense of 'action.' Such actions are not necessarily processes extending over a period of time: they may realize themselves in a single moment; they may be summed up in a particular mood, a given situation (pp. 123-4)."

Chapter IX of Professor Butcher's volume discusses Aristotle's easily misunderstood remarks concerning plot and character in tragedy. Of the six elements found in tragedy by Aristotle, the one of first importance in his view is plot (μῦθος); while *ethos* (ηθος)

stands second, and *dianoia* (διάνοια) third. "Plot in the drama, in its fullest sense, is the artistic equivalent of 'action' in real life. We have already observed that 'action' (πρᾶξις) in Aristotle is not a purely external act, but an inward process which works outward, the expression of a man's rational personality (p. 334)."

"The πρᾶξις of the drama has primary reference to that kind of action which, while springing from the inward power of will, manifests itself in external doing. The very word 'drama' indicates this idea. The verb (δρᾶν), from which the noun comes, is the strongest of the words used to express the notion of *doing;* it marks an activity exhibited in outward and energetic form. In the drama the characters are not described, they enact their own story and so reveal themselves. We know them not from what we are told of them, but by their *performance* before our eyes. Without action in this sense a poem would not be a bad drama, but no drama at all. The form might be epic or lyric, it would not be dramatic (pp. 335-6)." Thus dramatic action "embraces not only the deeds, the incidents, the situations, but also the mental processes, and the motives which underlie the outward events or which result from them (p. 337)."

Aristotle's own efforts to give clear and distinctive meanings to the terms *ēthos* and *diánoia,* observes Professor Butcher (p. 337), do not preclude misconceptions. Our word "character" means more than *ēthos,* which it usually translates. In fact, character as the inner self, manifested as thought, emotion, and volition, includes *ēthos* and *diánoia,* which are for Aristotle the causes of action. *"Ēthos,* as explained by Aristotle, is the moral element in character. It reveals a certain state or direction of the will. It is an expression of moral purpose, of the permanent disposition and tendencies, the tone and sentiment of the individual. *Diánoia* is the thought, the intellectual element, which is implied in all rational conduct, through which alone *ēthos* can find outward expression, and which is separable from *ēthos* only by a process of abstraction (p. 340)." In a drama, a determination or a moral choice involves *ēthos;* reflection, argument, statement of principle or opinion, fall under *diánoia.*

All this is necessary to enable a right interpretation of certain widely quoted dicta from Chapter VI of the *Poetics,* particularly (ch. vi): "Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions"; and, "Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character." "The meaning intended," explains Professor Butcher (pp. 344-5), "probably is, that there may be a tragedy in which the moral character of the individual agents is so weakly portrayed as to be of no account in the evolution of the

action. The persons may be mere types, or marked only by class characteristics, or lacking in those distinctive qualities out of which dramatic action grows." Our modern view, as Professor Butcher elsewhere notes, is that the business of the plot is to enable the working out and revelation of character, of the being and impulses of the *dramatis personae,* and that not mere plot but a conflict made dramatic by the collision of souls intent upon self-realization may properly be regarded as the essence of drama.

RUSKIN ON THE PATHETIC FALLACY

Now, therefore, putting these tiresome and absurd words quite out of our way, we may go on at our ease to examine the point in question,—namely, the difference between the ordinary, proper, and true appearances of things to us, and the extraordinary, or false appearances, when we are under the influence of emotion, or contemplative fancy; false appearances, I say, as being entirely unconnected with any real power or character in the object, and only imputed to it by us.

For instance—

> The spendthrift crocus bursting through the mould
> Naked and shivering, with his cup of gold.
> —O. W. Holmes.

This is very beautiful and yet very untrue. The crocus is not a spendthrift, but is a hardy plant; its yellow is not gold, but saffron. How is it that we enjoy so much having it put into our heads that it is anything else than a plain crocus?

It is an important question. For, throughout our past reasonings about art, we have always found that nothing could be good or useful, or ultimately pleasurable, which was untrue. But here is something pleasurable written in poetry which is nevertheless *un*-true. And what is more, if we think over our favorite poetry, we shall find it full of this kind of fallacy, and that we like it all the more for being so.

It will appear also, on consideration of the matter, that this fallacy is of two principal kinds. Either, as in this case of the crocus, it is the fallacy of wilful fancy, which involves no real expectation that it will be believed; or else it is a fallacy caused by an excited state of the feelings, making us, for the time, more or less irrational. Of the cheating of the fancy we shall have to speak presently; but, in this chapter, I want to examine the nature of the other error, that which the mind admits, when affected strongly by emotion. Thus, for instance, in "Alton Locke"—

> They rowed her in across the rolling foam—
> The cruel, crawling foam.

The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the "Pathetic Fallacy."

Now we are in the habit of considering this fallacy as eminently a character of poetical description, and the temper of mind in which

we allow it, as one eminently poetical, because passionate. But, I believe, if we look well into the matter, that we shall find the greatest poets do not often admit this kind of falseness,—that it is only the second order of poets who much delight in it.

Thus, when Dante describes the spirits falling from the bank of Acheron "as dead leaves flutter from a bough," he gives the most perfect image possible of their utter lightness, feebleness, passiveness, and scattering agony of despair, without, however, for an instant losing his own clear perception that *these* are souls, and *those* are leaves; he makes no confusion of one with the other. But when Coleridge speaks of

> The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
> That dances as often as dance it can,

he has a morbid, that is to say, a so far false, idea about the leaf: he fancies a life in it, and will, which there are not; confuses its powerlessness with choice, its fading death with merriment, and the wind that shakes it with music. Here, however, there is some beauty, even in the morbid passage; but take an instance in Homer and Pope. Without the knowledge of Ulysses, Elpenor, his youngest follower, has fallen from an upper chamber in the Circean palace and has been left dead, unmissed by his leader, or companions, in the haste of their departure. They cross the sea to the Cimmerian land; and Ulysses summons the shades from Tartarus. The first which appears is that of the lost Elpenor. Ulysses, amazed, and in exactly the spirit of bitter and terrified lightness which is seen in *Hamlet*, addresses the spirit with the simple, startled words:—

> Elpenor? How camest thou under the shadowy darkness?
> Hast thou come faster on foot than I in my black ship?

Which Pope renders thus:—

> O say, what angry power Elpenor led
> To glide in shades, and wander with the dead?
> How could thy soul, by realms and seas disjoined,
> Outfly the nimble sail, and leave the lagging wind?

I sincerely hope the reader finds no pleasure here, either in the nimbleness of the sail, or the laziness of the wind! And yet how is it that these conceits are so painful now, when they have been pleasant to us in other instances?

For a very simple reason. They are not a *pathetic* fallacy at all, for they are put into the mouth of the wrong passion—a passion which never could possibly have spoken them—agonized curiosity. Ulysses wants to know the facts of the matter; and the very last thing his mind could do at the moment would be to pause, or suggest in any wise what was *not* a fact. The delay in the first three lines, and conceit in the last, jar upon us instantly, like the most frightful discord in music. No poet of true imaginative power could possibly

have written the passage. It is worth while comparing the way a similar question is put by the exquisite sincerity of Keats:—

> He wept, and his bright tears
> Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
> Thus, with half-shut, suffused eyes, he stood;
> While from beneath some cumb'rous boughs hard by,
> With solemn step, an awful goddess came.
> And there was purport in her looks for him,
> Which he with eager guess began to read:
> Perplexed the while, melodiously he said,
> *'How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea?'*

Therefore, we see that the spirit of truth must guide us in some sort, even in enjoyment of fallacy. Coleridge's fallacy has no discord in it, but Pope's has set our teeth on edge. Without further questioning, I will endeavor to state the main bearings of this matter.

The temperament which admits the pathetic fallacy, is, as I said above, that of a mind and body in some sort too weak to deal fully with what is before them or upon them; borne away, or overclouded, or over-dazzled by emotion; and it is a more or less noble state, according to the force of the emotion which has induced it. For it is no credit to a man that he is not morbid or inaccurate in his perceptions, when he has no strength of feeling to warp them; and it is in general a sign of higher capacity and stand in the ranks of being, that the emotions should be strong enough to vanquish, partly, the intellect, and make it believe what they choose. But it is still a grander condition when the intellect also rises, till it is strong enough to assert its rule against, or together with, the utmost efforts of the passions; and the whole man stands in an iron glow, white hot, perhaps, but still strong, and in no wise evaporating; even if he melts, losing none of his weight.

So, then, we have the three ranks: the man who perceives rightly, because he does not feel, and to whom the primrose is very accurately the primrose, because he does not love it. Then, secondly, the man who perceives wrongly, because he feels, and to whom the primrose is anything else than a primrose: a star, or a sun, or a fairy's shield, or a forsaken maiden. And then lastly, there is the man who perceives rightly in spite of his feelings, and to whom the primrose is forever nothing else than itself—a little flower, apprehended in the very plain and leafy fact of it, whatever and how many soever the associations and passions may be, that crowd around it. And, in general, these three classes may be rated in comparative order, as the men who are not poets at all, and the poets of the second order, and the poets of the first; only, however great a man may be, there are always some subjects which *ought* to throw him off his balance; some, by which his poor human capacity of thought should be conquered, and brought into the inaccurate and vague

state of perception, so that the language of the highest inspiration becomes broken, obscure, and wild in metaphor, resembling that of the weaker man, overcome by weaker things.

And thus, in full, there are four classes: the men who feel nothing, and therefore see truly; the men who feel strongly, think weakly, and see untruly (second order of poets); the men who who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly (first order of poets); and the men who, strong as human creatures can be, are yet submitted to influences stronger than they, and see in a sort untruly, because what they see is inconceivably above them. This last is the usual condition of prophetic inspiration.

* * * *

Dante, in his most intense moods, has entire command of himself, and can look around calmly, at all moments, for the image or the word that will best tell what he sees to the upper or lower world. But Keats and Tennyson, and the poets of the second order, are generally themselves subdued by the feelings under which they write, or, at least, write as chosing to be so, and therefore admit certain expressions and modes of thought which are in some sort diseased or false.

Now so long as we see that the *feeling* is true, we pardon, or are even pleased by, the confessed fallacy of sight which it induces: we are pleased, for instance, with those lines of Kingsley's above quoted, not because they fallaciously describe foam, but because they faithfully describe sorrow. But the moment the mind of the speaker becomes cold, that moment every such expression becomes untrue, as being forever untrue, in the external facts. And there is no greater baseness in literature than the habit of using these metaphorical expressions in cold blood. An inspired writer, in full impetuosity of passion, may speak wisely and truly of "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame"; but it is only the basest writer who cannot speak of the sea without talking of "raging waves," "remorseless floods," "ravenous billows," etc.; and it is one of the signs of the highest power in a writer to check all such habits of thought, and to keep his eyes fixed firmly on the *pure fact,* out of which if any feeling comes to him or his reader, he knows it must be a true one.

Now in this there is the exact type of the consummate poetical temperament. For, be it clearly and constantly remembered that the greatness of a poet depends upon the two faculties, acuteness of feeling, and command of it. A poet is great, first in proportion to the strength of his passion, and then, that strength being granted, in proportion to his government of it; there being, however, always a point beyond which it would be inhuman and monstrous if he pushed

this government, and, therefore, a point at which all feverish and wild fancy becomes just and true.

* * * *

I believe these instances are enough to illustrate the main point I insist upon respecting the pathetic fallacy,—that so far as it *is* a fallacy, it is always the sign of a morbid state of mind, and comparatively of a weak one. Even in the most inspired prophet it is a sign of the incapacity of his human sight or thought to bear what has been revealed to it. In ordinary poetry, if it is found in the thoughts of the poet himself, it is at once a sign of his belonging to the inferior school; if in the thoughts of the characters imagined by him, it is right or wrong according to the genuineness of the emotion from which it springs; always, however, implying necessarily *some* degree of weakness in the character.—*Modern Painters,* vol. III, part IV, chap. 12.

LITERARY SUCCESS A TEST OF MERIT

By GEORGE HENRY LEWES

In how far is success a test of merit? Rigorously considered, it is an absolute fact. Nor is such a conclusion shaken by the undeniable fact that temporary applause is often secured by works which have no lasting value. For we must always ask, What is the nature of the applause, and from what circles does it rise? A work which appears at a particular juncture, and suits the fleeting wants of the hour, flattering the passions of the hour, may make a loud noise, and bring its author into strong relief. This is not luck, but a certain fitness between the author's mind and the public needs. He who first seizes the occasion, may be for general purposes intrinsically a feebler man than many who stand listless or hesitating till the moment be passed; but in Literature, as in Life, a sudden promptitude outrivals vacillating power.

Generally speaking, however, this promptitude has but rare occasions for achieving success. We may lay it down as a rule that no work ever succeeded, even for a day, but it deserves that success; no work ever failed but under conditions which made failure inevitable. This will seem hard to men who feel that in their case neglect arises from prejudice or stupidity. Yet it is true even in extreme cases; true even when the work once neglected has since been acknowledged superior to the works which for a time eclipsed it. Success, temporary or enduring, is the measure of the relation, temporary or enduring, which exists between a work and the public mind. The millet seed may be intrinsically less valuable than a pearl; but the hungry cock wisely neglected the pearl, because pearls could not, and millet seeds could, appease his hunger. Who shall say how much of the subsequent success of a once neglected work is due to the preparation of a public mind through the works which for a time eclipsed it?

Let us look candidly at this matter. It interests us all; for we have all more or less to contend against public misconception, no less than against our own defects. The object of Literature is to instruct, to animate, or to amuse. Any book which does one of these things succeeds; any book which does none of these things fails. Failure is the indication of an inability to perform what was attempted: the aim was misdirected, or the arm was too weak: in either case the mark has not been hit.

"The public taste is degraded." Perhaps so; and perhaps not. But in granting a want of due preparation in the public, we only grant that the author has missed his aim. A reader cannot be expected to be interested in ideas which are not presented intelligibly

to him, nor delighted by art which does not touch him; and for the writer to imply that he furnishes arguments, but does not pretend to furnish brains to understand the arguments, is arrogance. What Goethe says[1] about the most legible handwriting being illegible in the twilight, is doubtless true; and should be oftener borne in mind by frivolous objectors, who declare they do not understand this or do not admire that, as if their want of taste and understanding were rather creditable than otherwise, and were decisive proofs of an author's insignificance. But this reproof, which is telling against individuals, has no justice as against the public. For—and this is generally lost sight of—the public is composed of the class or classes directly addressed by any work, and not of the heterogeneous mass of readers. Mathematicians do not write for the circulating library. Science is not addressed to poets. Philosophy is meant for students, not for idle readers. If the members of a class do not understand,—if those directly addressed fail to listen, or listening, fail to recognize a power in the voice,—surely the fault lies with the speaker, who, having attempted to secure their attention and enlighten their understandings, has failed in the attempt. The mathematician who is without value to mathematicians, the thinker who is obscure or meaningless to thinkers, the dramatist who fails to move the pit, may be wise, may be eminent, but as an author he has failed. He attempted to make his wisdom and his power operate on the minds of others. He has missed his mark. *Margaritas ante porcos!* is the soothing maxim of a disappointed self-love. But we, who look on, may sometimes doubt whether they *were* pearls thus ineffectually thrown; and always doubt the judiciousness of strewing pearls before swine.

The prosperity of a book lies in the minds of readers. Public knowledge and public taste fluctuate; and there come times when works which were once capable of instructing and delighting thousands lose their power, and works, before neglected, emerge into renown. A small minority to whom these works appealed has gradually become a large minority, and in the evolution of opinion will perhaps become the majority. No man can pretend to say that the work neglected to-day will not be a household word to-morrow; or that the pride and glory of our age will not be covered with cobwebs on the book-shelves of our children. Those works alone can have enduring success which successfully appeal to what is permanent in human nature—which, while suiting the taste of the day, contain truths and beauty deeper than the opinions and tastes of the day; but even temporary success implies a certain temporary fitness.[1] In Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, we

[1] "Sprüche in Prosa," Kunst, V., 705.

are made aware of much that no longer accords with the wisdom or the taste of our day—temporary and immature expressions of fluctuating opinions—but we are also aware of much that is both true and noble now, and will be so for ever.

It is only posterity that can decide whether the success or failure shall be enduring; for it is only posterity that can reveal whether the relation now existing between the work and the public mind is or is not liable to fluctuation. Yet no man really writes for posterity; no man ought to do so.

"Wer machte denn der Mitwelt Spass?"

("Who is to amuse the present?") asks the wise Merry Andrew in *Faust*.[2] We must leave posterity to choose its own idols. There is, however, this chance in favour of any work which has once achieved success, that what has pleased one generation may please another, because it may be based upon a truth or beauty which cannot die; and there is this chance against any work which has once failed, that its unfitness may be owing to some falsehood or imperfection which cannot live.

In urging all writers to be steadfast in reliance on the ultimate victory of excellence, we should no less strenuously urge upon them to beware of the intemperate arrogance which attributes failure to a degraded condition of the public mind. The instinct which leads the world to worship success is not dangerous. The book which succeeds accomplishes its aim. The book which fails may have many excellencies, but they must have been misdirected. Let us, however, understand what is meant by failure. From want of a clear recognition of this meaning, many a serious writer has been made bitter by the reflection that shallow, feeble works have found large audiences, whereas his own work has not paid the printing expenses. He forgets that the readers who found instruction and amusement in the shallow books could have found none in his book, because he had not the art of making his ideas intelligible and attractive to

[1]It not infrequently happens that new ideas for which the public is hungry, it knows not why, are embodied in inferior works. Readers find in such writings what they seek in vain in more finished productions. The enthusiasm with which Wordsworth read the sonnets of so undeniably second-rate a mind as that of Bowles, finds its explanation in the fact that the latter poet, despite his mediocrity, had embodied in his commonplace lines some of the new ideas about nature with which Rousseau had stirred the heart of Europe.

[2]*Vorspiel auf dem Theater*, l. 77. The force of the quotation is lost without the preceding line:—

"Gesetzt, dass ich von Nachwelt reden wollte,
Wer machte denn der Mitwelt Spass?"

them, or had not duly considered what food was assimilable by their minds. It is idle to write in hieroglyphics for the mass when only priests can read the sacred symbols.

No one, it is hoped, will suppose that by what is here said I countenance the notion which is held by some authors—a notion implying either arrogant self-sufficiency or mercenary servility—that to succeed, a man should write down to the public. Quite the reverse. To succeed, a man should write up to his ideal. He should do his very best; certain that the very best will still fall short of what the public can appreciate. He will only degrade his own mind by putting forth works avowedly of inferior quality; and will find himself greatly surpassed by writers whose inferior workmanship has nevertheless the indefinable aspect of being the best they can produce. The man of common mind is more directly in sympathy with the vulgar public, and can speak to it more intelligibly, than any one who is condescending to it. If you feel yourself to be above the mass, speak so as to raise the mass to the height of your argument. It may be that the interval is too great. It may be that the nature of your arguments is such as to demand from the audience an intellectual preparation, and a habit of concentrated continuity of thought, which cannot be expected from a miscellaneous assembly. The scholarship of a Scaliger or the philosophy of a Kant will obviously require an audience of scholars and philosophers. And in cases where the nature of the work limits the class of readers, no man should complain if the readers he does not address pass him by to follow another. He will not allure these by writing down to them; or if he allure them, he will lose those who properly constitute his real audience.

A writer misdirects his talent if he lowers his standard of excellence. Whatever he can do best let him do that, certain of reward in proportion to his excellence. The reward is not always measurable by the number of copies sold; that simply measures the extent of his public. It may prove that he has stirred the hearts and enlightened the minds of many. It may also prove, as Johnson says, "that his nonsense suits their nonsense." The real reward of Literature is in the sympathy of congenial minds, and is precious in proportion to the elevation of those minds, and the gravity with which such sympathy moves: the admiration of a mathematician for the "Mécanique Celeste," for example, is altogether higher in kind than the admiration of a novel reader for the last "delightful story." And what should we think of Laplace if he were made bitter by the wider popularity of Dumas? Would he forfeit the admiration of one philosopher for that of a thousand novel readers?

To ask this question is to answer it; yet daily experience tells us that not only in lowering his standard, but in running after a

popularity incompatible with the nature of his talent, does many a writer forfeit his chance of success. The novel and the drama, by reason of their commanding influence over a large audience, often seduce writers to forsake the path on which they should labour with some success, but on which they know that only a very small audience can be found; as if it were quantity more than quality, noise rather than appreciation, which their mistaken desires sought. Unhappily for them, they lose the substance, and only snap at the shadow. The audience may be large, but it will not listen to them. The novel may be more popular and more lucrative, when successful, than the history of the essay; but to make it popular and lucrative the writer needs a special talent, and this, as was before hinted, seems frequently forgotten by those who take to novel writing.[1] Nay, it is often forgotten by the critics; they being, in general, men without the special talent themselves, set no great value on it. They imagine that Invention may be replaced by culture, and that clever "writing" will do duty for dramatic power. They applaud the "drawing" of a character, which drawing turns out on inspection to be little more than an epigrammatic enumeration of particularities, the character thus "drawn" losing all individuality as soon as speech and action are called upon. Indeed, there are two mistakes very common among reviewers: one is the overvaluation of what is usually considered as literary ability ("brilliant writing" it is called; "literary tinsel" would be more descriptive) to the prejudice of Invention and Individuality; the other is the overvaluation of what they call "solid acquirements," which really mean no more than an acquaintance with the classics. As a fact, literary ability and solid acquirements are to be had in abundance; invention, humour, and originality are excessively rare. It may be a painful reflection to those who, having had a great deal of money spent on their education, and having given a great deal of time to their solid acquirements, now see genius and original power of all kinds more esteemed than their learning; but they should reflect that what is learning now is only the diffused form of what was once invention. "Solid acquirement" is the genius of wits become the wisdom of reviewers.

Authors are styled an irritable race, and justly, if the epithet be understood in its physiological rather than its moral sense. This irritability, which responds to the slightest stimulus, leads to much of the misdirection of talent we have been considering. The greatness of an author consists in having a mind extremely irritable, and at the same time steadfastly imperial:—irritable that no stimulus may be inoperative, even in its most evanescent solicitations; im-

[1]Lewes is here drawing upon his own experience. See the Introduction to Professor F. N. Scott's edition of Lewes's essay (Allyn and Bacon, 1891).

perial, that no solicitation may divert him from his deliberately chosen aims. A magisterial subjection of all dispersive influences, a concentration of the mind upon the thing that has to be done, and a proud renunciation of all means of effect which do not spontaneously connect themselves with it—these are the rare qualities which mark out the man of genius. In men of lesser calibre the mind is more constantly open to determination from extrinsic influences. Their movement is not self-determined, self-sustained. In men of still smaller calibre the mind is entirely determined by extrinsic influences. They are prompted to write poems by no musical instinct, but simply because great poems have enchanted the world. They resolve to write novels upon the vulgarest provocations: they see novels bringing money and fame; they think there is no difficulty in the art. The novel will afford them an opportunity of bringing in a variety of scattered details; scraps of knowledge too scanty for an essay, and scraps of experience too meagre for independent publication. Others, again, attempt histories, or works of popular philosophy and science; not because they have any special stores of knowledge, or because any striking novelty of conception urges them to use up old material in a new shape, but simply because they have just been reading with interest some work of history or science, and are impatient to impart to others the knowledge they have just acquired for themselves. Generally it may be remarked that the pride which follows the sudden emancipation of the mind from ignorance of any subject, is accompanied by a feeling that all the world must be in the state of darkness from which we have ourselves emerged. It is the knowledge learned yesterday which is most freely imparted to-day.

We need not insist on the obvious fact of there being more irritability than mastery, more imitation than creation, more echoes than voices in the world of Literature. Good writers are of necessity rare. But the ranks would be less crowded with incompetent writers if men of real ability were not so often misdirected in their aims. My object is to define, if possible, the Principles of Success—not to supply recipes for absent power, but to expound the laws through which power is efficient, and to explain the causes which determine success in exact proportion to the native power on the one hand, and to the state of public opinion on the other.

The Laws of Literature may be grouped under three heads. Perhaps we might say they are three forms of one principle. They are founded on our threefold nature—intellectual, moral, and æsthetic.

The intellectual form is the *Principle of Vision* [Imagination, Insight].

The moral form is the *Principle of Sincerity*.

The æsthetic form is the *Principle of Beauty*.

It will be my endeavor to give definite significance, in succeeding chapters, to these expressions, which, standing unexplained and unillustrated, probably convey very little meaning. We shall then see that every work, no matter what its subject-matter, necessarily involves these three principles in varying degrees; and that its success is always strictly in accordance with its conformity to the guidance of these principles.

Unless a writer has what, for the sake of brevity, I have called Vision, enabling him to see clearly the facts or ideas, the objects or relations, which he places before us for our own instruction, his work must obviously be defective. He must see clearly if we are to see clearly. Unless a writer has Sincerity, urging him to place before us what he sees and believes *as* he sees and believes it, the defective earnestness of his presentation will cause an imperfect sympathy in us. He must believe what he says, or we shall not believe it. Insincerity is always weakness; sincerity even in error is strength. This is not so obvious a principle as the first; at any rate it is one more profoundly disregarded by writers.

Finally, unless the writer has grace—the principle of Beauty I have named it—enabling him to give some æsthetic charm to his presentation, were it only the charm of well-arranged material, and well-constructed sentences, a charm sensible through all the intricacies of *composition* and of *style*, he will not do justice to his powers, and will either fail to make his work acceptable, or will very seriously limit its success. The amount of influence issuing from this principle of Beauty will, of course, be greatly determined by the more or less æsthetic nature of the work.

Books minister to our knowledge, to our guidance, and to our delight, by their truth, their uprightness, and their art. Truth is the aim of Literature. Sincerity is moral truth. Beauty is aesthetic truth. How rigorously these three principles determine the success of all works whatever, and how rigorously every departure from them, no matter how slight, determines proportional failure, with the inexorable sequence of a physical law, it will be my endeavor to prove in the chapters which are to follow.—From *The Principles of Success in Literature.*

HENRY JAMES ON THE ART OF FICTION

As Stevenson explains at the beginning of his essay, the "Humble Remonstrance" was written in connection with the appearance (in 1884) of an article by Walter Besant, followed by one by Henry James, both entitled "The Art of Fiction." Stevenson objects that their topic is too broad, since fiction is "an element which enters largely into all the arts but architecture," and suggests that what is really discussed is the art of narrative. As we have seen, his argument is concerned mainly with the contention of James that the paramount business of the novelist is to attain such an illusion of reality that his novel shall verily "compete with life."

James accords but qualified approval to the contentions of Besant, finding some of his points merely general or obvious, while others may be true if analyzed and precisely stated. Thus, every novelist should indeed write from experience, but "The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it—this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience, and they occur in country and in town, and in the most differing stages of education. If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions *are* experience, just as (have we not seen it?) they are the very air we breathe. Therefore, if I should certainly say to a novice, 'Write from experience and experience only,' I should feel that this was rather a tantalizing monition if I were not careful immediately to add, 'Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!'"

And then the crux of the matter. "I am far from intending by this to minimize the importance of exactness—of truth of detail. One can speak best from one's own taste, and I may therefore venture to say that the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel—the merit on which all its other merits (including that conscious moral purpose of which Mr. Besant speaks) helplessly and submissively depend. If it be not there they are all as nothing, and if these be there, they owe their effect to the success with which the author has produced the illusion of life. The cultivation of this success, the study of this exquisite process, form, to my taste, the beginning and the end of the art of the novelist. They are his inspiration, his despair, his reward, his torment, his delight. It is here in very truth that he competes with life; it is here that he competes with his brother the painter in *his* attempt to render the look of things, the look that

conveys their meaning, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle."

This suggested analogy with painting should, I think, be carefully considered. If for some one a particular painting may be said to compete with life, because it gives the illusion of reality, it is yet not for a moment regarded as replacing life, or as right painting if for one moment it has deceived the eye and seemed to be actuality, not art—a woman of flesh and blood, say, and not clearly "a phantom of delight." Art can certainly compete with life in interest, interest being attention which implies a feeling of like or dislike—a sign that the exciting presence is or is not definitely in accord with our peculiar mental constitution. Now life, as Maupassant and Stevenson and many others of equally divergent nature have declared, appears inconsequential, brutish, infinitely complicated, continually astonishing—to use their own words. And since a great work of art, *qua* art, has selected, simplified, synthesized, and rationalized as well as spiritualized the discrete substance of life, it satisfies our longings where life does not, by virtue of its being, in Aristotelean phrase, "more philosophical." Or it shows us how to see life as purposeful and significant when we turn again to look.

To return: Henry James can find no validity in the common division of novels into novels of character, novels of incident, and the like, nor in the division of prose fiction into novel and romance. "There are bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures; but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture one says of character, when one says novel one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is an expression of character."

Of the novelist and his critic, James has a clear thing to say, a thing often paraphrased by critics today, and rarely lived up to. "We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his *donnée*: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it. Naturally I do not mean that we are bound to like it or find it interesting; in case we do not, our course is perfectly simple—to let it alone. We may believe that of a certain idea even the most sincere novelist can make nothing at all, and the event may perfectly justify our belief; but the failure will have been a failure to execute, and it is in the

execution that the fatal weakness is recorded. If we pretend to respect the artist at all, we must allow him his freedom of choice, in the face, in particular cases, of innumerable presumptions that the choice will not fructify. Art derives a considerable part of its beneficial exercise from flying in the face of presumptions, and some of the most interesting experiments of which it is capable are hidden in the bosom of common things. ..... Nothing, of course, will ever take the place of the good old fashion of 'liking' a work of art or not liking it: the most improved criticism will not abolish that primitive, that ultimate test. I mention this to guard myself from the accusation of intimating that the idea, the subject, of a novel or a picture, does not matter. It matters, to my sense, in the highest degree, and if I might put up a prayer it would be that artists should select none but the richest. Some, as I have already hastened to admit, are much more remunerative than others, and it would be a world happily arranged in which persons intending to treat them should be exempt from confusions and mistakes. This fortunate condition will arrive only, I fear, on the same day that critics become purged from error."

Toward the close of his essay, James reverts to the opinion of Besant that the novel should have a "conscious moral purpose." He begins with inquiries. "Will you not define your terms and explain how (a novel being a picture) a picture can be either moral or immoral? You wish to paint a moral picture or carve a moral statue: will you not tell us how you would set about it? We are discussing the Art of Fiction; questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution; questions of morality are quite another affair, and will you not let us see how it is that you find it so easy to mix them up? ... In the English novel (by which, of course, I mean the American as well), more than in any other, there is a traditional difference between that which people know and that which they agree to admit that they know, that which they see and that which they speak of, that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow to enter into literature. There is a great difference, in short, between what they talk of in conversation and what they talk of in print. The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field, and I should directly reverse Mr. Besant's remark and say not that the English novel has a purpose, but that it has a diffidence. To what degree a purpose in a work of art is a source of corruption I shall not attempt to inquire; the one that seems to me least dangerous is the purpose of making a perfect work. ... There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that intelligence is fine will the

novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth. To be constituted of such elements is, to my vision, to have purpose enough. No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind; that seems to be an axiom which, for the artist in fiction, will cover all needful moral ground; if the youthful aspirant take it to heart it will illuminate for him many of the mysteries of 'purpose'."

This essay was included in *Partial Portraits,* printed by the Macmillan Company in 1888.

ANATOLE FRANCE ON CRITICISM AS SELF-EXPRESSION

As I consider it, . . . criticism, like philosophy and history, is a sort of novel for the use of well-advised and curious minds, and every novel, if rightly interpreted, is an autobiography. The good critic is he who relates the adventures of his soul among masterpieces.

Objective criticism no more exists than does objective art, and those who flatter themselves that they are putting anything other than themselves into their works are dupes of the most deceiving illusion. The truth is that one never gets outside oneself. That is one of our greatest misfortunes. What would we not give to see, for even a minute, the sky and the earth with the faceted eye of a fly, or to understand nature with the rude and simple brain of an orang-utang? But that is denied us. One is not able, like Tiresias, to be a man and remember having been a woman. We are locked up in our own personalities as in an eternal prison. The best we can do, it seems to me, is to acknowledge with a good grace this frightful situation and confess that we speak of ourselves every time that we lack the strength to keep silent.

To be candid, the critic ought to say: "Gentlemen, I am going to talk about myself apropos of Shakespeare, of Racine, of Pascal, or of Goethe. This gives me a splendid chance."

I had the honor of knowing M. Cuvillier-Fleury, who was an obstinate old critic. One day when I had come to see him in his little house in the Avenue Raphael, he showed me the modest library of which he was proud. "Monsieur," he siad to me, "oratory, belles-lettres, philosophy, history—all the kinds are here represented, without counting criticism, which embraces them all. Yes, the critic is by turns orator, philosopher, historian."

M. Cuvillier-Fleury was right. The critic is all that, or at least he can be. He has occasion to show the rarest, the most diverse, and the most opposite intellectual qualities. And when he is a Sainte-Beuve, a Taine, a J.-J. Weiss, a Jules Lemaitre, a Ferdinand Brunetière, he does not fail to do so. Without going beyond himself, he produces the intellectual history of mankind. Criticism is the most recent of the literary forms; it will end perhaps by absorbing all the others. It is admirably adapted to a highly civilized society, of rich memories and long traditions. It is peculiarly appropriate to a curious, learned and polished humanity. To flourish, it presupposes more of culture than do the other literary forms. Its cre-

ators were Montaigne, Saint-Évremond, Bayle, and Montesquieu. It proceeds upon the evidences of philosophy and history. For its development, there is necessary an epoch of absolute intellectual freedom. It displaces theology, and, if we seek the universal doctor, the St. Thomas Aquinas of the nineteenth century, whom should we have to think of but Sainte-Beuve? He was the canonized saint of criticism; I revere his memory. But, to speak quite frankly, dear Monsieur Hébrard, I think he was wiser when he was planting cabbages than when he was making books.

* * * *

A book, according to Littré, is a bound collection of sheets of paper, written or printed. That definition does not satisfy me. I should define a book as a work of sorcery from which all sorts of images escape to trouble our minds and change our hearts. To put it better: a book is a little magical machine which transports us into the midst of images of the past or among supernatural shadows. Those who read many books are like eaters of hashish. They live in dream. The subtile poison that penetrates their brain makes them insensible to the real world and throws them as prey to terrible or charming phantoms. Books are the occidental opium. They devour us. A day will come when we shall all be keepers of libraries, and that will be the end.

Let us love books as the mistress of the poet loved her pain. Let us love them; they cost us dear enough. Let us love them; we are dying of them. Yes, books kill us. Believe me, who adore them, who have long given myself to them unreservedly. Books kill us. We have too many, and too many kinds of them. Men existed for long ages without reading at all, and that was precisely the time when they did the greatest and most useful deeds, for that was the time when they passed from barbarism to civilization. Though without books, they were not wholly bereft of poetry and morality; they knew by heart songs and little sacred sayings. In their childhood the old women told them of the Ass's Skin and Puss in Boots, of which long afterward editions were made for bibliophiles. The first books were great rocks, covered with inscriptions in official and religious style.

That was very long ago. What frightful progress we have made since then! Books multiplied amazingly in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Today their production has increased a hundredfold. In Paris alone there are published fifty volumes a day, without counting the journals. It is a monstrous orgy. We shall come out of it mad. It is the fate of mankind to fall successively into contrary excesses. In the Middle Ages ignorance gave birth to fear. There reigned then mental maladies that we no longer know. Nowadays we are rushing, through study, into a general paralysis. Would

there not be more of wisdom and good taste in preserving moderation?

Let us be book-lovers and let us read books, but let us not seize them indiscriminately; let us be delicate, let us select, and like the lord in one of Shakespeare's comedies, let us say to our book-seller: "I would that they be well bound, and that they speak of love."—*La Vie Littéraire,* Paris, 1888, prefatory letter.

To establish criticism, we talk of tradition and universal agreement. They don't exist. A fairly general opinion, it is true, does favor certain works. But that is because of prejudice, and not at all through choice or by effect of a spontaneous preference. The works that all the world admires are those nobody looks into. We receive them as a precious burden, which we pass on to others without concerning ourselves about them. Do you really believe there is much freedom in the approval we bestow upon the Greek and Latin classics, or even the French? And the taste that leads us toward a certain contemporary work and draws us away from another, is this really free? Isn't it determined by many circumstances alien to the contents of the particular work, the chief of which is the disposition to imitate, so powerful with man and animal? That spirit of imitation is necessary to make us live without going too much astray; we carry it into all our actions, and it controls our aesthetic sense. Without it our opinions in affairs of art would be much more discordant than they are. It is because of this that a work which, for whatsoever reason, gained at the outset certain suffrages receives afterward a vast number. The first alone were free; all the others had only to comply. They have neither spontaneity, nor insight, nor courage, nor individuality. And by their multitude they create glory. It all depends upon a very slight beginning. One sees also that works despised at their birth have little chance of pleasing at another time, and that on the other hand works celebrated from their first appearance long preserve their reputation and are still esteemed after they have become unintelligible. What proves clearly that the agreement is purely the effect of prejudice is that they cease together. We could supply numerous examples.—*La Vie Littéraire,* quatrième série, Paris, 1892, Preface.

FERDINAND BRUNETIERE ON IMPRESSIONISTIC CRITICISM

In his essay, *La Critique Impressionniste,* Brunetière quotes the dictum of Anatole France: "Objective criticism no more exists than does objective art," and then proceeds to examine the principles, the implications, and the actual practice of the impressionists. Certain advantages he can see in the general position. "It allows, or rather, it sanctions, all complacencies and all contraditions. The 'relativity' of changing impressions explains everything and answers every objection. Giving us their opinions not as true, but as 'their own,' the impressionistic critics secure to themselves the means of changing them—and we know that they do not fail to use these. They dispense thus with studying the books about which they talk and the subjects therein treated, which is sometimes a great gain. 'Is it necessary to try to explain to you the impression that I received in reading the second volume of the *History of the People of Israel?*' M. Anatole France lately asked us. 'Is there need to show you the state of my mind as I dreamed between the pages?' And, without awaiting our reply . . . , M. France tells us that in his childhood there was among his toys 'a Noah's ark, painted red, with all the animals in pairs, and Noah and his children beautifully turned.' If this proceding is ingenious, it appears also highly convenient! Thanks to his 'Noah's ark,' M. Anatole France had no need even to read the *History of the People of Israel;* he dreamed *between* the pages of the book; and, as he is M. France, he talked no less agreeably about it."

The impressionist theory precludes dogmatism and judgment, but Brunetière brushes the sand from our eyes. "The *Contemporains* of M. Jules Lemaitre is nothing but a collection of judgments—upon men, it is true, rather than upon works—and its 'impressionism', after all, consists only in the malice or the drollery of the considerations that actuate them. But who has been more severe and merciless —on M. George Ohnet, for example, or on M. Émile Zola—than the sceptical, indulgent, and mocking M. France? 'Extravagance,' 'platitude,' 'dulness,' 'wretched rhapsodies,' 'abominable paltriness': M. France on that occasion lost even his Attic—or rather his Alexandrian—manner, on which he usually piques himself. And might I not cite the judgments of M. Desjardins, which are no less decided for being less keen. Heaven preserve me from reproaching them for these. It doesn't distress me that a rhapsody should be called by its name, nor that what one thinks, one should say. In literature as elsewhere everything would be the better if we did such things more often and

more boldly. But what an affectation it is to pretend not to 'judge' when in fact one does, to give out as 'impressions' judgments that one well means, at the bottom of one's heart, should be taken as such, and, when one does one thing, to pretend to persuade people that one does another."

"Literary judgment," Brunetière observes, "is the complex product of three unequal terms. In a literary work—poem, drama, or novel —we find what we bring to it of ourselves, that which we impart to it of our fundamental nature; and, in that sense, as it is said, we make its beauty. Some of us find peculiar pleasure in *Candide,* and others enjoy themselves better with *Paul et Virginie.* In the second place, we find in a literary work what its admirers and its critics have put there, the faults or good qualities which time by itself, in its imperceptible passing, has added, and which did not exist there for its contemporaries. In *l'Ecole des femmes* or in *Tartufe* their contemporaries did not see what we see: and for the good reason that Molière did not dream of it. Nor did they find in *Cléopâtre* or in *le Grand Cyrus* what we find of prolixity, weakness, and insipidity: they thought less quickly, they read more slowly, and they were more tolerant. But finally, must we not find in *Cléopâtre, Tartufe,* and *Candide* something also of what Calprenède, Molière, and Voltaire did put there? Whatever we may be, in order to provoke in us determinate impressions, is it not required that *Candide* and *Tartufe* have the provoking or determining qualities? And whatever these qualities be in themselves, is it not true that they do not reveal themselves in a novel of the younger Crebillon or in a comedy of Poisson or of Montfleury?"

"And no more than this is necessary for the establishment of *objective* criticism. When we have made clear to ourselves the true nature of our impressions, which is not always easy, and is always a prolonged affair; when we have made allowance, which is still more difficult, for what belongs to prejudice, education, the period, example and authority in our impressions, there remains a work, a man, a date. This is enough. We may set ourselves to the exact determination of that date, and through that to state precisely in what time, in what moment of literary history, in what social environment, amid what prepossessions the man lived and the work appeared. We can try to say what the man was, what sort of man—sad or cheerful, base or noble, worthy of hate or admiration. For the generations inherit, more than they believe, from all that has preceded them: Nisard was fond of saying that in all times what is most alive in the present is the past. And finally, we can undertake, after having thus explained it, to classify and judge the work. This is the whole object of criticism. What is to be seen there that is not *objective?* that is not, or can not be, independent of the personal tastes, the

peculiar sympathies, of him who attempts to explain, classify, or judge? And if this is not seen, or cannot be said, what is left of the insinuating paradoxes of M. Anatole France, the scintilating paradoxes of M. Jules Lemaitre, and the fretful paradoxes of M. Paul Desjardins?"

Moreover, we inevitably compare things and rate them, goes on the objective critic. By virtue of possessing more or less of some common quality, by virtue of better or worse adaptation to a given end, by virtue of ease and effectiveness of functioning, or the lack of these—we do as scientists, as critics of art, as members of a competitive society, continually weigh one being or product, one object of desire or of aversion, against another.

As for the classification of literary works, this is as rational and feasible, asserts Brunetière, as the classification of animal species. "One literary *genre* is, indeed, superior to another, and within the same *genre*—drama, ode, or novel—one work is nearer to or farther from the perfection of its kind, only for reasons analagous to those which in the hierachy of natural organisms raise vertebrates above molluscs, for example, and among vertebrates, the cat or dog above the ornithorhynchus. Such is the true way of understanding 'the relativity of knowledge'; such is the right way; such is the only way that is not sophistry and word-war. Had we the 'faceted eye of a fly' or the 'rude and simple brain of an orang-utang,' things might change for us their look and meaning, but not their relations, which would continue to unite them to one another, nor that system, always somehow bound together, which these relations have formed. And thence, since laws are nothing else than the expression of these relations, it results finally that to deny the possibility of objective criticism is to deny the possibility of any science whatsoever. If there is no objective criticism, no more is there objective natural history or chemistry or physics. This is not to call criticism a science, but only to say that it is related to science, and having like science a precise object, it may borrow from science methods, processes, and signs."—*Essais sur la littérature contemporaine,* Paris, 1892.

THE ART OF CRITICISM

By J. MIDDLETON MURRY

Criticism is an art. It has its own technique. Ideally, at least, this technique would have its different perfection for each several critic. But we may outline so much of the method as seems to be essential to the most important kind of criticism, appreciation.

First, the critic should endeavor to convey the whole effect of the work he is criticizing, its peculiar uniqueness. Second, to work back and define the unique quality of the sensibility which necessitated this expression. Third, to establish the determining causes of this sensibility. (Here the relevant circumstances of the writer's life have their proper place.) Fourth, to analyze the means by which this sensibility was given expression, in other words, to conduct a technical examination into the style. Fifth, a still closer examination of a perfectly characteristic passage, that is, a passage in which the author's sensibility is completely expressed. This fifth and final movement is really a return to the first, but with the important difference that the relevant material has been ordered and placed before the reader.

The various phases in this symphonic movement of an ideal criticism may, of course, be ordered quite differently. The historical or the ethical critic will enlarge more on the nature of the sensibility, its value in itself and its relation to other types of sensibility; he will pay little or no attention to the means by which this sensibility is expressed. He will not be a worse critic for that, but he will be a less *literary* critic. On the other hand the critic who is unable to adjudicate between the values of various kinds of sensibility has no means of distinguishing between great art and perfect art. That judgment is essential to a true criticism, in spite of (or rather in virtue of) the fact that it is in the last resort an ethical judgment.

There is not much need to worry ourselves about the function of criticism any more than we worry about the function of poetry. Both are arts; both have to give delight; both have to give the delights which are proper to themselves as arts. If it gives this delight, criticism is creative, for it enables the reader to discover beauties and significances which he had not seen, or to see those which he had himself glimpsed, in a new and revealing light. What, I think, we may reasonably ask, is that criticism should be less timid; that it should openly accept the fact that its deepest judgments are moral. A critic should be conscious of his moral assumptions and take pains to put into them the highest morality of which he is capable. That is only another way of saying that the critic should be conscious

of himself as an artist. He should be aware of the responsibilities imposed by his art; he should respect the technique of his craft. He should not be cheap, he should not be shallow, he should not be insincere, either in praise or blame, but above all in these modern times, he should not be insincere in praise.

This excerpt is made by courtesy of *The New Republic* from an article entitled, "A Critical Credo," in the Literary Supplement of that journal, dated October 26, 1921. Mr. Murry has been a critic on the Westminster Gazette and the Times of London, and an editor of *The Athenaeum*. He has published *Fyodor Dostoevsky* (1917) and *The Evolution of an Intellectual* (1920).

H. L. MENCKEN ON THE CRITIC'S MOTIVE AND FUNCTION

". . . I propose the substitution of 'catalytic' for 'creative' (he is objecting to the term 'creative criticism' used by Mr. Spingarn), despite the fact that 'catalytic' is an unfamiliar word, and suggests the dog-Latin of the seminaries. I borrow it from chemistry, and its meaning is really quite simple. A catalyzer, in chemistry, is a substance that helps two other substances to react. For example, consider the case of ordinary cane sugar and water. Dissolve the sugar in the water and nothing happens. But add a few drops of acid and the sugar changes into glucose and fructose. Meanwhile, the acid itself is absolutely unchanged. All it does is to stir up the reaction between the water and the sugar. The process is called catalysis. The acid is a catalyzer.

"Well, this is almost exactly the function of a genuine critic of the arts. It is his business to provoke the reaction between the work of art and the spectator. The spectator, untutored, stands unmoved; he sees the work of art, but it fails to make any intelligible impression on him; if he were spontaneously sensitive to it, there would be no need for criticism. But now comes the critic with his catalysis. He makes the work of art live for the spectator; he makes the spectator live for the work of art. Out of the process comes understanding, appreciation, intelligent enjoyment—and that is precisely what the artist tried to produce.—From "Criticism of Criticism of Criticism," in *Prejuudices First Series,* Alfred A. Knopf.

"He (i. e., the critic) is not actually trying to perform an impossible act of arctic justice upon the artist whose work gives him a text (concludes Mr. Mencken in *Prejudices, Third Series,* Knopf, 1922). He is not trying, with mathematical passion, to find out exactly what was in that artist's mind at the moment of creation, and to display it precisely and in an ecstasy of appreciation. He is not trying to bring the work discussed into accord with some gaudy theory of aesthetics, or ethics, or truth, or to determine its degree of departure from that theory. He is not trying to lift up the fine arts, or to defend democracy against sense, or to promote happiness at the domestic hearth, or to convert sophomores into right thinkers, or to serve God. He is not trying to fit a group of novel phenomena into the orderly process of history. He is not even trying to discharge the catalytic office that I myself, in a romantic moment, once sought to force upon him. He is, first and last, simply trying to express himself (he is on the way, at least, toward autonomous

artistry). He is trying (a) to arrest and challenge a sufficient body of readers, to make them pay attention to him, to impress them with the charm and novelty of his ideas, to provoke them into an enchanted awareness of him, and (b) to achieve thereby for his own inner ego that agreeable feeling of a function performed, a tension relieved, a katharsis attained which Beethoven achieved when he wrote the Fifth Symphony, and a hen achieves every time she lays an egg.

"It is, in brief, the obscure, inner necessity of Joseph Conrad that moves him: everything else is an afterthought. Conrad is moved by that necessity to write romances; Beethoven was moved to write music; poets are moved to write poetry; critics are moved to write criticism."

ROBERT LYND ON THE BOOK REVIEW: A BOOK PORTRAIT

"The comparison of a review to a portrait fixes attention on one essential quality of a book-review. A reviewer should never forget his responsibility to his subject. He must allow nothing to distract him from his main task of setting down the features of his book vividly and recognizably. One may say this even while admitting that the most delightful book-reviews of modern times—for the literary *causeries* of Anatole France may fairly be classified as book-reviews—were the revolt of an escaped angel against the limitations of a journalistic form. But Anatole France happens to be a man of genius, and genius is a justification of any method. In the hands of a pinchbeck Anatole France, how unendurable the review conceived as a *causerie* would become! Anatole France observes that 'all books in general, and even the most admirable, seem to me infinitely less precious for what they contain than for what he who reads puts into them.' That, in a sense, is true. But no reviewer ought to believe it. His duty is to his author: whatever he 'puts into him' is a subsidiary matter. 'The critic,' says Anatole France again, 'must imbue himself thoroughly with the idea that every book has as many different aspects as it has readers, and that a poem, like a landscape, is transformed in all the eyes that see it, in all the souls that conceive it.' Here he gets nearer the idea of criticism as portraiture, and practically every critic of importance has been a portrait-painter. In this respect Sainte-Beuve is at one with Macauley, Pater with Matthew Arnold, Anatole France (occasionally) with Henry James. They may portray authors rather than books, artists rather than their work, but this only means that criticism at its highest is a study of the mind of the artist as reflected in his work.

"Clearly, if the reviewer can paint the portrait of an author, he is achieving something better even than the portrait of a book. But what, at all costs, he must avoid doing is to substitute for a portrait of one kind or another the rag-bag of his own moral, political, or religious opinions."—From "Book Reviewing," in *The Art of Letters*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921.

THE STYLE OF BALZAC

In her *Memoir* of Balzac, his translator, Katharine Prescott Wormeley, gives her impressions of his styles. "Balzac's style is the voice of his genius; what his genius was, that his style is—like master, like man. When he wrestled in solitude to form his thought, he took the words that best formulated it. Language was not to him an art in itself, it was the sluice of his ideas. As the torrent of his thought, such as we see it in his books, came rushing on, with its hundred currents and aspects, philosophical, metaphorical, descriptive, it seized words, or made them, or modelled phrases, as its expression needed. This was certainly not classical, and many of the French writers who in Balzac's day were still under the tradition of the seventeenth century were shocked; though he was not as much of a neologist as they said he was, for the studies he had made of the French language from the time of Rabelais for the *Contes Drolatiques* enabled him to replace many words which the purists of the seventeenth century had discarded. But, however impetuous the torrent of Balzac's writing, the current is always clear; it is not limpid, like the soft flowing of George Sand's language, but in whatever channel, or stream, or brook it runs, the words that best express the thing to be expressed are there. There are times, in fact, when Balzac's style is matchless in its presentation of the *feeling* of the scene he is describing. Take, for instance, the rendering of the 'Majesty of Cold,' the flight of the eider duck, the breaking of the ice-bonds, in *Séraphita.* It may almost be said that words of description could no farther go in conveying not only a scene, but the sensation of it. Could poetry as an art do more?

"It has been said that Balzac is a difficult writer to translate. He does not seem so, for the reason that he is so clear. There are times when it is easy to see that he has worked too long over his thought, and has corrected his original words too often. Patience is then needed to construct a passage after him; indeed, it sometimes seems as though the clauses of a paragraph were like the bits of a Chinese puzzle, to be turned this way and that before they can be fitted into place; but this is rare, and happens only when his mind flags a little, or his relentless conscience will not let him give up the expression of minute particulars. For the most part, and particularly when an ardent emotion or conviction carries him through equally long sentences with many clauses, the current of his thought runs clear, like rapids with the sunlight in them."

From *Portraits contemporains* by Balzac's friend Théophile Gautier, himself a novelist and poet, Miss Wormeley quotes an account of the actual production of a page of the great realist. "As

usual, Balzac had risen at midnight, and had worked until my arrival. His features showed no sign of fatigue, except that of a slight brownness beneath the eyelids, and he was gayety itself during the whole breakfast. Little by little, the conversation turned on literature, and he complained of the difficulties of the French language. Style troubled him much, and he sincerely thought he had none; it is true that at this time the critics, as a rule, denied him any. . . . Balzac, in spite of the vogue he was beginning to acquire with the public, was not admitted among the gods of romanticism, and he knew it. Though they read his books eagerly enough, they did not dwell on the serious aspect of them; in fact, even to his admirers, he was long 'the most prolific of our novel writers,' and nothing more. This seems amazing to us now, but I can answer for the truth of it. Consequently, he took unwearying pains to form his style, and in his great anxiety for correctness he would consult those who were far inferior to him. He told me that before putting his name to any of his books he had written under various pseudonyms a score of volumes 'to unlimber his hand.'

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"And yet Balzac, immense in brain, penetrating physiologist, profound observer, intuitive spirit, did not possess the literary gift. In him yawned an abyss between thought and form. Sometimes he despaired of ever crossing it. Into it he flung volume after volume, nights of toil without number, essay upon essay, without ever filling the gulf; a whole library of unacknowledged books went into it. A less robust will would have been discouraged and overcome; but Balzac, happily, had unshaken confidence in his genius, which all others ignored. He willed to be a great man, and he became one, by the incessant projection of that fluid, more powerful than electricity, of which he has made such subtle analysis in *Louis Lambert*.

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"I have said that Balzac worked laboriously, and, stubborn founder that he was, returned the metal to the pot a dozen times if it did not completely fill the mould. Like Palissy, he would have burned the furniture, the floors, even the beams of his house to keep up the fire of his furnace, and forego no experiment. The severest necessities never induced him to deliver a work on which he had not spent his last effort; he gave many admirable examples of this literary conscientiousness. When sitting before his table in his monkish robe in the silence of the night, with the white sheets lying before him, on which fell the light of seven candles, which he always used concentrated by a green shade, he forgot all, and then began a struggle greater than that of Jacob with the angel, that of form and idea. In the morning, when he issued from that battle, wearied but not vanquished, the fire being out and the atmosphere of the

room chilly, his head smoked and his body exhaled a sort of mist like that we see from a horse in winter. Sometimes a single sentence would occupy a whole night. It would be made and remade, twisted kneaded, hammered, lengthened, shortened, written in a dozen different ways, and, singular to relate, the proper form, the absolutely best, did not present itself until after all approximative forms had been exhausted. No doubt the metal did often flow with a fuller and freer current, but there are very few pages in Balzac which are identical with the first copy.

"His method of proceeding was as follows: When he had long borne and lived a subject, he wrote, in a rapid, uneven, blotted, almost hieroglyphic writing, a species of outline on several pages. These pages went to the printing office, from which they were returned in placards; that is to say, in detached columns in the centre of large sheets. He read these proofs attentively; for they already gave to his embryo work that impersonal character which manuscript never possesses; and he applied to this first sketch the great critical faculty with which he was gifted, precisely as though he were judging of another man's work. Then he began operations; approving or disapproving, he maintained or corrected, but, above all, he *added*. Lines started from the beginning, middle, or end of sentences, and made their way to the margins on the right or left or top or bottom, leading to amplifications, insertions, deletions, epithets, and adverbs. After some hours' work the paper might have been taken for a drawing of fireworks by a child. Rockets, darting from the original text, exploded on all sides. Then there were crosses, crosses re-crossed like those of a blazon, stars, suns, Arabic figures, letters, Greek, Roman, or French, all imaginable signs mingled with erasures. Strips of paper, fastened on by wafers or pins, were added to the insufficient margins, and were rayed with lines of writing, very fine to save room, and full themselves of erasures; for a correction was hardly made before that again was corrected. By this time the original proof had almost disappeared in the midst of this apparently cabalistic scribble, which the compositors passed from hand to hand, each unwilling to do more than one hour of Balzac.

"The following day the proofs came back, all corrections made, and the bulk, of course, doubled. Balzac set to work again—always amplifying; adding here a trait, there a detail, a picture, an observation of manners, a characteristic word, an effective sentence; pressing the idea more and more into the form, and getting always nearer to his inward conception; choosing, like a painter, from three or four outlines the final line. Often this tremendous labor ended with an intensity of attention, a clearness of perception, of which he alone was capable. He would see that the thought was warped by the execution; that an episode predominated; that a figure which he

meant should be secondary, for the general effect, was projecting out of his plan. Then with one stroke of his pen he bravely annihilated the result of four or five nights of labor. He was heroic at such times.—*The Works of Honoré de Balzac,* translated by K. P. Wormeley, vol. XX, Athenaeum Club, N. Y.

AMY LOWELL ON POLYPHONIC PROSE

"The poems are written in 'polyphonic prose'," explains Miss Lowell in her preface to *Can Grande's Castle* (Macmillan, 1918), "a form which has proved a stumbling block to many people. 'Polyphonic prose' is perhaps a misleading title, as it tends to make the layman think that this is a prose form. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The word 'prose' in its title simply refers to the manner in which the words are printed; 'polyphonic'—many-voiced —giving the real key. 'Polyphonic prose' is the freest, the most elastic, of all forms, for it follows at will any, and all, of the rules which guide other forms. Metrical verse has one set of laws, cadenced verse another; 'polyphonic prose' can go from one to the other in the same poem with no sense of incongruity. Its only touchstone is the taste and feeling of its author.

"Yet, like all other artistic forms, it has certain fundamental principles, and the chief of these is an insistence on the absolute adequacy of the manner of a passage to the thought it embodies. Taste is therefore its determining factor; taste and a rhythmic ear.

"In the preface to *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed,* I stated that I had found the idea of the form in the works of the French poet, M. Paul Fort. But in adapting it for use in English I was obliged to make so many changes that it may now be considered as practically a new form. . . .

"Putting aside one rhythm of English prosody after another, I finally decided to base my form upon the long, flowing cadence of oratorical prose. The variations permitted to this cadence enable the poet to change the more readily into those of *vers libre,* or even to take the regular beat of metre, should such a marked time seem advisable. It is, of course, important that such changes should appear as not only adequate, but necessary when the poem is read aloud. . . .

"So much for the vexed question of rhythm. Others of the many voices of 'polyphonic prose' are rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and return. Rhyme is employed to give a richness of effect, to heighten the musical feeling of a passage, but it is employed in a different way from that usual in metrical verse. For, although the poet may, indeed must, employ rhyme, it is not done always, nor, for the most part, regularly. In other words, the rhyme should seldom come at the ends of the cadence, unless such an effect be especially desired. . . .

"Return in 'polyphonic prose' is usually achieved by the recurrence of a dominant thought or image, coming in irregularly and

in varying words, but still giving the spherical effect which I have frequently spoken of as imperative in all poetry.

"It will be seen, therefore, that 'polyphonic prose' is, in a sense, an orchestral form. Its tone is not merely single and melodic as is that of *vers libre,* for instance, but contrapuntal and various."

CONRAD AIKEN ON THE STYLE OF AMY LOWELL

Of *Can Grande's Castle,* the poet and critic Conrad Aiken writes: "This is an astonishing book; never was Miss Lowell's sheer energy of mind more in evidence. Viewed simply as a piece of verbal craftsmanship it is a sort of Roget's Thesaurus of colour. Viewed as a piece of historical reconstruction it is a remarkable feat of documentation, particularly the longest of the 'epics,' the story of the bronze horses of San Marco. Viewed as poetry, or prose, or polyphonic prose—or, let us say, for caution's sake, as literature—well, that is another question. It is a tribute to Miss Lowell's fecundity of mind that one must react to her four prose-poems in so great a variety of ways.

". . . The real touchstone of a work of art is not, ultimately, the taste or feeling of the author (a singularly unreliable judge), but the degree to which it 'gets across' (as they say of the drama) to, let us say, an intelligent audience.

"And here one may properly question whether in their totality Miss Lowell's prose-poems quite 'get across.' They are brilliant, in the aesthetic sense; they are amazingly rich and frequently delightful in incident; they are unflaggingly visualized; they are, in a manner, triumphs of co-ordination. And yet, they do not quite come off. Why is this? Is it the fault of Miss Lowell or of the form? A little of each; and the reasons are many.

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"In her preface Miss Lowell says that she has taken for the basis of her rhythm the long cadence of oratorical prose. In this, however, she is mistaken. She has an inveterate and profoundly temperamental and hence perhaps unalterable addiction to a short, ejaculatory, and abrupt style—a style, indeed, of which the most striking merits and defects are its vigorous curtness and its almost total lack of curve and grace. This is true of her work, whether in metrical verse, free verse, or prose; it is as true of 'The Cremona Violin' as of 'The Bombardment.' This style, obviously, is ideal for a moment of rapid action or extreme emotional intensity. But its effect when used *passim* is not only fatiguing, it is actually irritating. Its pace is too often out of all proportion to the pace of the action. One feels like a horse who is at the same time whipped and reined in. The restlessness is perpetual, there is no hope of relaxation or ease, one longs in vain for a slowing down of the movement, an expansion of it into longer and more languid waves. One longs, too, for that delicious sublimation of tranquillity and pause which

comes of a beautiful transition from the exclamatory to the contemplative, from the rigidly angular to the musically curved.

"This misapplication of style to theme manifests itself as clearly on the narrowly aesthetic plane as on the rhythmic. Here again one sees a misuse of pointillism, for Miss Lowell splashes too much colour, uses colour and vivid image too unrestrainedly and too much at the same pitch of intensity. The result is that the rate of aesthetic fatigue on the reader's part is relatively rapid. So persistent is Miss Lowell's colouristic attitude, so nearly unvaried is her habit of presenting people, things, and events in terms of colour alone, that presently she has reduced one to a state of colour blindness. Image kills image, hue obliterates hue, one page erases another. And when this point has been reached one realizes that Miss Lowell's polyphonic prose has little else to offer. Its sole *raison d'être* is its vividness.

"One wonders, indeed, whether Miss Lowell has not overestimated the possibilities of this form. It is precisely at those points where polyphonic prose is more self-conscious or artificial than ordinary prose—where it introduces an excess of rhyme, assonance, and alliteration—that it is most markedly inferior to it. Theory to the contrary, these shifts from prose to wingèd prose or verse are often so abrupt as to be incongruous and disturbing. But disturbance as an element in aesthetic attack should be subordinate, not dominant —the exception, not the rule. Miss Lowell's polyphonic prose is a perpetual furor of disturbance, both of thought and of style. Again, refrain should be sparely used, adroitly varied and concealed; and the counterpoint of thought, if it is not to become monotonous, must be a good deal subtler than it is, for instance, in 'Bronze Horses.' All these artifices are used to excess, and the upshot is a style of which the most salient characteristic is exuberance without charm. 'Taste' and the 'rhythmic ear' too frequently fail."—From "The Technique of Polyphonic Prose: Amy Lowell," in *Scepticisms*, by Conrad Aiken (Alfred A. Knopf, 1919).

JAMES HUNEKER AND THE SEVEN ARTS

"The acute sensitiveness, the instability of temperament, the alternations of timidity and rashness, the morbid exaltation and depression which were, and still are, the stigmata of my personal 'case'—as the psychiatrists put it—come from the Irish side of my house. . . . When President Woodrow Wilson spoke of his 'single-track mind,' he merely proved that by powerful concentration he was able to canalize one idea, to focus it, and thus dispose of it. This inhibitory power is not possessed by everyone. I, for example, have a polyphonic mind. I enjoy the simultaneous flight of a half-dozen trains of ideas, which run on parallel tracks for a certain distance, then disappear, arriving nowhere. This accounts for my half-mad worship of the Seven Arts which have always seemed one single art; when I first read Walter Pater's suggestion that all the other arts aspire to the condition of music, I said: 'That's it,' and at once proceeded to write of painting in terms of tone [See the article on Botticelli, entitled 'Painted Music,' in *Bedouins*], of literature as if it were only form and color, and of life as if it is [*sic*] a promenade of flavours. Now, I admit that this method apart from its being confusing to the reader, is also aesthetically false. It didn't require Professor Babbitt to tell us that in his *New Laocoon*. The respective substance of each art is different, and not even the extraordinary genius of Richard Wagner could fuse disparate dissimilarities. The musician in him dominated the poet, dramatist, and scene-painter. And in this paragraph I am precisely demonstrating what I spoke of —my polyphonic habit of thinking, if thinking it may be thus called. I often suffer from a 'split' or dissociated personalities, hence my discursiveness—to call such a fugitive ideation by so mild a name. But I started to tell you of my maternal grandfather and I am winding up on Wagner. Talk about 'free fantasy' in a modern tone-poem, or a five-voiced fugue, or a juggler spinning six plates at once!"—*Steeplejack*, by James Gibbons Huneker, pp. 22-23 (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).

NONSENSE NOVELS

"Many of my friends are under the impression that I write these humorous nothings in idle moments when the wearied brain is unable to perform the serious labors of the economist. My own experience is exactly the other way. The writing of solid, instructive stuff fortified by facts and figures is easy enough. There is no trouble in writing a scientific treatise on the folk-lore of Central China, or a statistical enquiry into the declining population of Prince Edward Island. But to write something out of one's own mind, worth reading for its own sake, is an arduous contrivance only to be achieved in fortunate moments, few and far between. Personally, I would sooner have written *Alice in Wonderland* than the whole Encyclopaedia Britannica."—*Sunshine Sketches,* by Stephen Leacock, Preface. John Lane Company.

BLURB

It would be a grave oversight not to pay somewhere our respects to what is now, thanks to Mr. Gelett Burgess, so happily known as the "blurb." The blurb is a perfumed flower, here of one species, there of another, worn in the buttonhole of every well-tailored publisher's jacket. From the jacket of the Modern Library edition of *Winesburg, Ohio,* by Sherwood Anderson, I cull this musky violet.

"The publishers asked Ben Hecht, the author of *Erik Dorn,* to write a brief description of *Winesburg, Ohio.* It follows. *'Winesburg, Ohio,* remains. It is part of the prairies and towns of the Middle West. Its pages hold a little world. Figures of earth, with their eyes lost in yesterdays, hearts groping among the trifles of tomorrows. A marvelous book into which the bruised ones, the hating ones, the loving ones, come as to a confessional. Anderson writes with an odd gentleness. His embittered eyes forgive. Passion, avarice, futility and the lusts of dead hearts darken his men and women. But he bids them hope. There is no cynicism in him. He covers the barren irony of his scene with a caress. There is in Anderson's phrases a pity for all things that live. His sentences hesitate as if fearing to crush something. Yet in them men and women breathe. He has learned the secret that survived Dostoevsky. . . . . Man is the only animal able to adjust himself to anything. He survives where the hog perishes, he laughs where the gods would go mad'."

Yet authors pretend that we have no adequate criticism, and critics that authors cannot learn to love one another!

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